

SUPPLEMENTS TO
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE



Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters

*Introduction, Translation
and Commentary*



ANNA M. SILVAS

BRILL

Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters

Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

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ST.
GREGORY.

OF
NYSSA.

THE SOUL THAT LOOKS
UP TO GOD CONCEIVES
THAT GOD DESIRES
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BEEN MORTALLY WOUNDED
BY THE ACTION
OF LOVE AND
GOD IS LOVE

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Anna M. Silvas



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*Dedicated
with esteem and affection
to Alan Treloar
my 'Libanius'*

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a letter writer St Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–394) runs a poor third to the other two Cappadocian Fathers—at least to judge from body of his extant letters. We have more than three hundred of St Basil the Great’s letters and more than two hundred of St Gregory Nazianzen’s. Present critical editions muster a mere thirty letters for Gregory of Nyssa. Nevertheless, as we hope to show, the younger Gregory was an assiduous writer of letters. Happily it has proved possible in this book to make some significant additions to the established collection of thirty.

My interest in Gregory’s letters arose in the context of researching St Basil and the emergence of monasticism in Asia Minor in the 4th century AD, resulting in my book *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great*. That study uncovered the importance of St Macrina (c. 327–379) and the transformations of her house at Annisa as the prototypical monastic community whose features appear in the earliest edition of Basil’s *Asketikon* (c. 365). In seeking the sources of Macrina’s life, I came upon Gregory of Nyssa’s **letter 19**, which is both the earliest documentation of her existence, and critical for Gregory’s own history. Yet it had never appeared before in English. A wider survey soon revealed the highly unsatisfactory state of Gregory’s letters as they are available in English.

Despite the appearance of Pasquali’s critical edition in 1925, English speaking readers without Greek were still largely confined to a collection of eighteen letters based on defective editions of the 16th–19th centuries, especially the eighteen letters edited by Zaccagni.¹ The numbering of the letters was confusing. Their co-ordination with the numbering of the critical edition itself requires a minor research project. The translations of a few other pieces were scattered here and there if one knew where to look for them.² A fresh treatment of Gregory’s letters therefore seemed long overdue.

An occasion arose to remedy this situation by undertaking a comprehensive new English translation of Gregory’s letters supplemented

¹ Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers 2nd ser. vol. 5, 527–548.

² E.g. letters 29, 30 in NPNF 2nd ser., vol. 5, 33–34.

with appropriate introductions and notes. In canvassing what to include in the collection, it seemed timely to go beyond the critical editions and seek out all the letters and fragments of letters that a century of scholarship had discovered and assigned to Gregory, and beyond that, hopefully, to find new ones.

This task was undertaken in the hope both of providing something stimulating for experienced scholars in the field, and of serving the needs of those who wish to study the Fathers of the Church, but cannot spare a few years to acquire Greek and Latin (and French and German and Italian). The primary aim of the book, therefore, is to provide a readership in English with a thoroughly researched translation, backed by the best of modern textual scholarship on textual matters. A co-ordinate concern has been to situate these letters as far as possible in the chronology of Gregory's life, which in itself is no easy task, given the patchiness of the sources. The resulting book is offered as a resource for those who wish to explore Gregory's life, character and mind in any number of directions beyond the brief of this book, e.g. biographical, social, literary, historical, theological.

The book comprises three major sub-collections of letters. The first, 'Prelude' is divided into two parts, Prelude 1: Letters of St Basil; Prelude 2: Letters of St Gregory Nazianzen. The idea at first was to make up for the lack of extant letters from Gregory himself in the earlier period of his life. But then it seemed worthwhile to call on the entire dossier of letters and excerpts of letters from Basil and Gregory Nazianzen to or concerning the younger Gregory, even those dealing with the later period for which we do have Gregory's letters.

The second sub-collection is called the 'Pasquali collection' after Georgio Pasquali who added notably to Zaccagni's collection in his magisterial edition of 30 letters published in 1925. It was republished as volume 8.2 in the *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* series. In 1990 Pierre Maraval published a somewhat revised edition of the letters with French translation and ample commentary, but he did not venture beyond Pasquali's selection of thirty letters. Letters 1–30 in the present book were first translated from Pasquali's edition, and afterwards checked against Maraval's text. My indebtedness to Maraval's comprehensive introduction and notes will be evident in my footnotes.

The third sub-collection is called 'Supplement', in which as many additional letters of Gregory as possible have been assembled. It

begins with the most interesting *Canonical Letter to Letoius* as **letter 31**, which was always acknowledged as Gregory's. It has never to my knowledge appeared in English before. Then follow six letters for which the authorship of Gregory has been acknowledged or reasonably argued through the course of the 20th century. In two cases, **letters 32** and **34**, only fragments of the letter survive, though in the case of **letter 32**, a full text is recoverable from a very exact Latin translation. The identity of the translator is proposed.

Maraval, *Lettres*, 16, n. 2, suggested 'Il n'est pas impossible, par ailleurs, qu'il y ait d'autres lettres de Grégoire dans la correspondance de Basile ou celle de Grégoire de Nazianze'. In view of this remark, I searched Basil's and Gregory Nazianzen's correspondence for any letters that might possibly call for reassignment to Gregory of Nyssa.

In dredging the well-raked field of Basil's letters, one letter in particular attracted attention: letter 365 of the Benedictine edition, regarded as spurious today by all scholars. Analysis of the style and contents suggested the possibility of Gregory of Nyssa's authorship. It is included here for the reader's consideration as the final letter of the present collection, **letter 37**.

The letters of Gregory Nazianzen were also explored for possible reassignments. Gregory of Nyssa's **Letter 1** is the outstanding example of a letter transmitted in the corpus of Nazianzen's letters which is now acknowledged by all to be the younger Gregory's. The result of this research however, was negative, except that a certain question mark may be retained against his letter 236, *to the community at Sannabodae*. Some external evidence suggests Gregory of Nyssa's authorship, e.g. it is transmitted in two manuscripts of his works. The letter is rather short however, and does not offer much material to work with. Insufficient evidence was found to prove or disprove it as a letter of Gregory of Nyssa, certainly not enough to mount an argument for reassignment. Hence it is omitted from this volume.

Detailed studies of the individual letters appear before each letter. Whenever a document included in the present book is mentioned, it appears in bold type for easier recognition (as above). All citations of the *Life of Macrina* ('VSM') are according to my own division in to chapter and verse as they appear in my book *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God*.

Then there is the Introduction. It was not possible even in so textually oriented a book to omit some survey of Gregory's life and

character as the necessary context and crucible of the letters. I have brought to this task extensive research into Basil, Macrina and Gregory's family background, and have been able to highlight the family's important contacts with Eustathius of Sebasteia (intentionally deleted from the family history by Gregory), and the all-important role this family played, through Macrina and Basil, in gaining and taming the native ascetic movement of Asia Minor for the Church. Two historical questions are given more extended treatment: whether Gregory was married or not, and the date of Basil's death, together with aspects of Macrina's and Gregory of Nyssa's chronology dependant on it. Assessment of Gregory's marital status is given direction in the first place by the study of **Nazianzen's letter 197** and amplified by analysis of Gregory of Nyssa's *On Virginity*.

The introduction concludes with a sketch of Gregory's rhetorical style. It is of course necessary to cite Greek words in the discussion of vocabulary. Yet a fair measure of Gregory's literary style and 'flavour' can be conveyed even in translation.

Completion of this work was made possible by an Australian Research Council Fellowship. I am bound also to record my thanks for the support received from the University of New England and the School of Classics History and Religion within the University. Many individual persons also deserve thanks, but I mention in particular Professor G. H. R. Horsley for his mentoring and constant friendship, Professor Ekkehard Mühlenberg of Göttingen, who proved a generous ally at difficult points of the research, Anna Cavallaro and Brennan Wales for help with important articles in Italian, Carol Handebo for sure guidance in all matters of academic administration, my friend Margaret Watts of the Veech Library, Catholic Institute of Sydney, for her ever prompt response to my requests, Nicholas Hunter of Caeros Pty Ltd (Armidale) for the graphics accompanying **letters 20** and **25**, and Anna Terentieva my iconographer friend who crafted the intuitive icon of St Gregory that appears as the frontispiece.

Professional thanks are due to Brill's academic reader whose observations were not less than forensic and helped rescue the work from several blunders. Oxford University Press has permitted me to reproduce my map from *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great*.

Deserving a special thanks are my friends, Robert and Margaret Hanna. It was while sitting at their dining room table on a night

in the Spring of the year of our Lord 1999 that the idea of this book was first conceived.

Lastly, and not least, thanks be to God most high and to his saints, especially to Gregory and to his illustrious brothers and sisters. The sense of their presence has been my help, comfort and inspiration. It has been my privilege to present them afresh to the world.

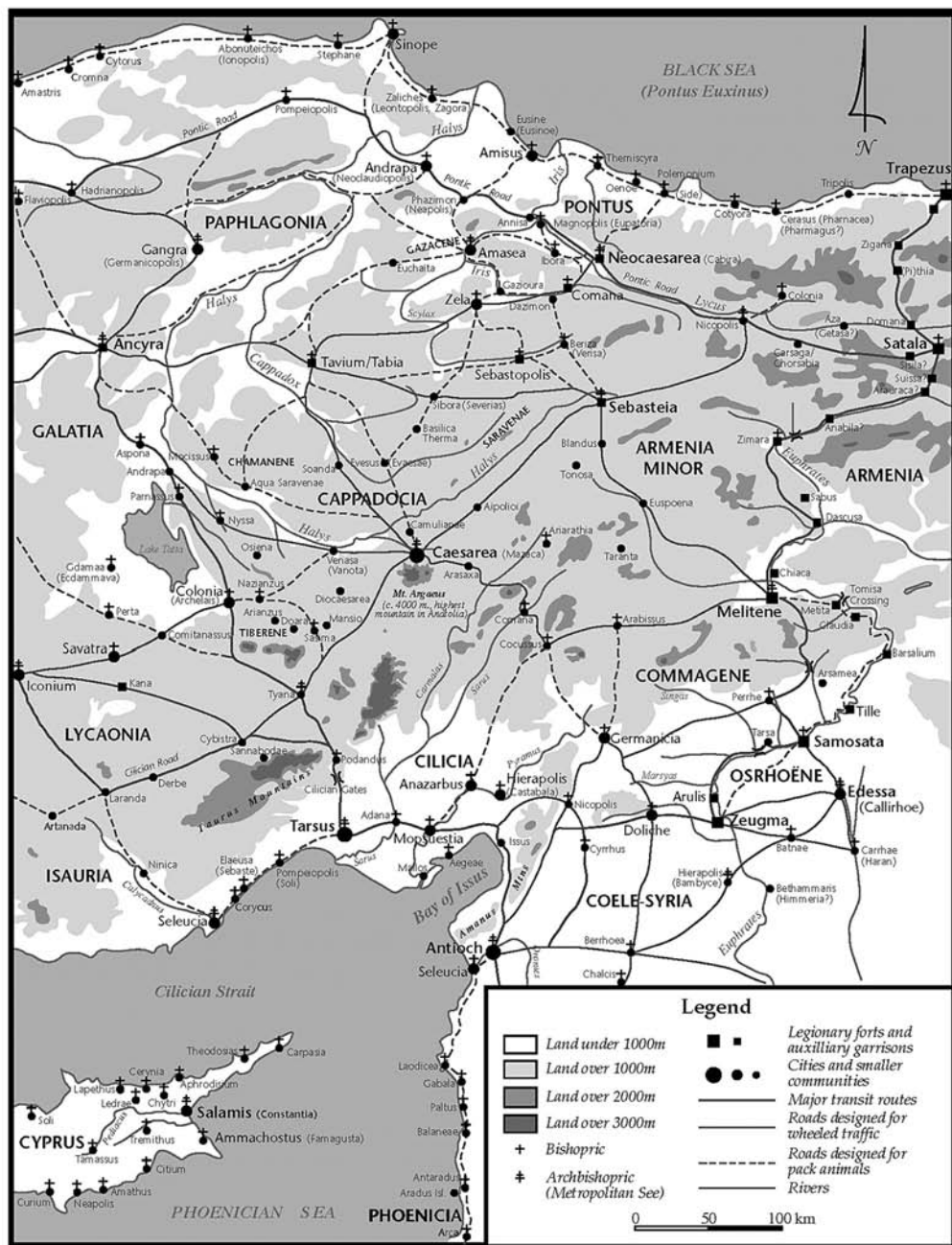
Anna Silvas, August 2006
The University of New England
Armidale NSW

ABBREVIATIONS

Aubineau	Aubineau, Michel (ed.) <i>Grégoire de Nysse, Traité de la Virginité</i> , Sources Chrésiennes 119 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1966).
BBV I	P. J. Fedwick, <i>Bibliotheca Basiliana Universalis I Epistulae</i> , Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993).
Callahan	V. W. Callahan, <i>Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works</i> , Fathers of the Church 58 (Washington D.C.: CUA press, 1967), 'The Life of Macrina', 161–191.
Courtonne	Yves Courtonne, <i>Saint Basile Correspondance</i> , 3 vols. 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), Tome I: Lettres I–C, Tome II: Lettres CI–CCXVIII, Tome III: CCIX–CCCLXVI.
Def	R. J. Deferrari (tr.), <i>Saint Basil—The Letters in Four Volumes</i> , Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, vol. 1, 1926; vol. 2, 1928; vol. 3, 1930; and vol. 4, 1934).
Daniélou, 'Chronologie'	Jean Daniélou, 'La Chronologie des sermons de Grégoire de Nysse', <i>Revue de Sciences Religieuses</i> 29 (1955), 346–372.
Daniélou, 'Le mariage'	Jean Daniélou, 'Le mariage de Grégoire de Nysse et la chronologie de sa vie', <i>Revue des Études Augustiniennes</i> 2 (1956), 71–8.
Fedwick	P. J. Fedwick, <i>Basil of Caesarea, Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: a sixteen-hundredth anniversary symposium</i> , 2 vol. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980).
Gallay	Paul Gallay, <i>Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Correspondance, Lettres CIII–CXLIX</i> (sic), 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003).
GNO	W. Jaeger (gen. ed.), <i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958–). Volumes and sub-volumes are cited by relevant numbers.

- Maraval Pierre Maraval, *Grégoire de Nysse: Lettres* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1990).
- Maraval, 'La date' Pierre Maraval, 'La date de la mort de Basile de Césarée', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 34 (1988), 25–38.
- Mitchell Stephen Mitchell, Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods in Asia Minor*, 2 vols. (Oxford: OUP, 1993).
- May, 'die Chronologie' Gerhard May, 'Die Chronologie des Lebens und der Werke des Gregor von Nyssa', *Écriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse*, Actes du Colloque de Chevetogne, 22–26 Septembre 1969, ed. Marguerite Harl (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 53–67; includes a response by P. Maraval, 66–7.
- NPNF 2nd ser. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, general editors Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, original edition, Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1895 (reprinted Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, June 1995); cited by volume number; vol. 5, Moore, William, and Wilson, Henry Austin (tr.), is dedicated to Gregory of Nyssa.
- Pouchet Jean Robert Pouchet, 'Une lettre spirituelle de Grégoire de Nysse identifiée: l'épistula 124 du corpus basilien', *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988), 28–46.
- Pasquali G. Pasquali, *Gregorii Nysseni Epistulae*, editio altera GNO 8.2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1959).
- Pasquali, 'Le lettere' G. Pasquali, 'Le Lettere di Gregorio di Nissa', in *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* (NS) 3 (1923), 75–136.
- PG *Patrologia Graeca*, for J.-P. Migne (general ed.), *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Graeco-Latina*, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857–1866).
- PL *Patrologia Latina*, for J.-P. Migne (general ed.), *Patrologia Cursus Completus: Series Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–1855).

- VSM *Vita Sanctae Macrinae (the Life of St Macrina)* by Gregory of Nyssa; ed. V. W. Callahan in J. W. Jaeger (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958–1996), 8.1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), 370–414; P. Maraval, *Grégoire de Nysse: La vie de Sainte Macrine*, Sources Chrétiennes 178 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1971). New English translation in A. M. Silvas *Macrina the Younger, Philosopher of God* (Turnhout Brepols, 2007).



Central Anatolia in the time of the Cappadocian Fathers

BIOGRAPHY

THE ASCENTS OF GREGORY

The great St Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–394), the most outstanding speculative thinker among the Greek Fathers between Origen and Maximus the Confessor, presents a more complex and perhaps sympathetic personality than do his great siblings Macrina and Basil. Yet any attempt to discover the ground out of which his life arose runs up against the patchiness of the documentary record. We do not have the hundreds of personal letters that help us understand Basil's course. No contemporary or friend wrote a synopsis of his life in an encomium or biography the way that Gregory Nazianzen did for Basil, or Gregory of Nyssa himself did for his sister Macrina, or Athanasius did for Antony of Egypt. Gregory's surviving works are not as rich in autobiographical passages as are Basil's letters and the long poems in which Nazianzen meditates on his own life. And often in the personal testimonies that do survive Gregory manages to reveal himself and yet remain somehow elusive.

This introductory biography will attempt to provide a reasonable chronology and historical context within which to situate Gregory's letters. Something more is also ventured, and that is, to suggest the personal ground out of which the letters arose and to offer possible solutions to some opacities in the record. The scope of this book does not allow us to incorporate an exhaustive analysis of the progress of his thought, highly desirable though that would be. But we do hope to sketch a few aspects of his personal and spiritual development. A key that can help us to do that is his own idea of progressive spiritual 'ascents':

Those *who are progressing from strength to strength*, according to the prophetic blessing (Ps 84.7), are disposed in their hearts for noble ascents. Whenever they lay hold of some good thought, they are led by it to a still loftier thought, which brings about for the soul an ascent on high. Thus he who ever *stretches forward* (Phil 3.13), shall never cease on the good road upward (cf. Ps 84.5), being guided through lofty thoughts to the apprehension of transcendent realities.¹

¹ τὴν τῶν ὑπερκειμένων κατανόησιν. The passage opens the *Homily on the Sixth Psalm*, GNO 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 187–193 at 187.

By carefully probing of the sources, it is possible to see Gregory's life falling naturally into several distinct periods, and to gain some sense of his spiritual progress—and dare we say on occasion regress—from one stage to the next. The outstanding thing is that though Gregory's course does not immediately present us with the same straightforward and austere focus on spiritual realities as do his great siblings, yet advance in the spirit he did and very much so. Slowly at first, but steadily, all his setbacks, stubbornnesses, ineptitudes and distresses became for him so many occasions of eventual spiritual breakthrough, through the grace which he mentions so often, the prayers of his parents (so he reports Macrina's view of it), the witness of his remarkable siblings, and most importantly his own choices for a generous response. Gifted with a keen intellect honed in rhetorical studies, Gregory emerged from a somewhat conflicted and selfish youth and young adulthood with a generous spirit which carried him far beyond his own natural bent to stay out of the religious and political fray and live a more cultured, contemplative, and dare one say, dilettante life. He exercised his freedom, which in the end was true freedom, not in protecting his own inclinations, but in bravely answering to what was asked of him, above all in service of the Faith and the Church. A man both culturally sophisticated and almost childlike in his responses at times, he was far from an unqualified success on the stage of the world. Nevertheless his resolute obedience to the call became for him personally a transforming path of virtue and of religious and intellectual development. In this way Gregory made his gradual 'ascents' to transcendent realities. By his life's end, he attained a breathtaking spiritual momentum that surely carried him into that eternity of unceasing advance in God of which he spoke so passionately and eloquently in his later writings.

The time is perhaps not far off when a comprehensive biography of Gregory, man, thinker and saint, might be attempted, employing all the different strands of sympathetic analysis and appreciation and a wide sweep of the sources. It is to be hoped that the present introductory biography and edition of his letters in English may make a contribution to that end.

EARLY FAMILY LIFE

Gregory of Nyssa was a scion of unarguably the most remarkable single family in the records of Christian piety. His mother, Emmelia, was a native of Cappadocia, and his father, Basil Senior, was a native of Neocaesarea, the capital of Pontus Polemoniacus. Socially both families were of the landed aristocracy. Religiously, they were known for their early and tenacious adherence to Christianity, which was proven in the days when it was not socially advantageous. Emmelia's grandfather died a martyr. Basil Senior's parents were St Macrina the Elder and her husband, both confessors of the faith during the last savage persecution in the eastern Roman empire under Maximin Daia (c. 306–313).² Through the 320s, 330s and early 340s, the family successfully rebuilt its fortunes. Basil Senior won high repute as a rhetorician and advocate in the city of Neocaesarea. Though of Pontus, he and other Christian aristocrats of this generation were exactly the kind Eusebius had in mind when in his *Life of Constantine* 4.43 he mentioned the Cappadocians who were a match for anyone in their Christian education and learning.

While the men maintained the continuum with the professional and cultural standards of the time, women in many respects set the religious agenda of the family, as was so often the case in other aristocratic Christian families. Macrina the Elder was a zealous custodian of the traditions of the church of Neocaesarea, and that meant the memory of St Gregory Thaumaturgus, the disciple of Origen and apostle of Pontus. And so especially through her, the family tapped a stream of moderate Origenism, i.e. an intellectually engaged and potentially contemplative Christianity that St Gregory had brought with him from Palestine to Pontus. The works of Origen and Philo, along with the pagan classics studied in the higher curriculum taught by Basil, especially the philosophers, stocked the family library.

The children were born during the family's residence in Neocaesarea. In nearly twenty years, Emmelia bore ten children, nine of whom survived infancy. One cannot forbear quoting here Gregory Nazianzen's eloquent praise of Emmelia's fruitfulness, both bodily and spiritual:

I marvelled when I looked on Emmelia's family so great and so good—
all the wealth of her mighty womb; but when I considered how she

² Gregory Nazianzen *Oration* 43.5–6.

was Christ's cherished possession of pious blood, this is what I said: 'No wonder! The root itself is so great!' This is the holy reward of your piety, you most excellent of women: the honour of your children, for whom you had but one desire.³

The eldest of Basil and Emmelia's children was St Macrina the Younger, born in c. 327, the second was St Basil the Great, born in c. 329, the third was Naucratus, born in c. 330, and then, roughly in order, Theosebia who became a virgin with her elder sister at Annisa, St Gregory of Nyssa, born in c. 335 at the earliest,⁴ three other daughters, some or all of whom were married,⁵ and finally St Peter of Sebasteia, born about the time of his father's death in c. 345.

While resident in Neocaesarea, the family made the acquaintance of a rather controversial figure, Eustathius of Sebasteia, the inspirer of a Christian ascetic movement whose influence was already being felt during the late 330s across northern Anatolia, from Constantinople to Armenia. What appears to have happened is that in travelling to the capital Eustathius used to come up to Neocaesarea to join the *Via Pontica*, the great north road threading northern Anatolia from Constantinople to the eastern frontier at Satala. Around the year 340 he became the subject of a spate of church indictments, including one in Neocaesarea.⁶ It came to a head in a council held in Gangra, metropolis of Paphlagonia, in about 340/341,⁷ in which a range of hyper-ascetic and anti-social excesses of the movement were censured. Eustathius sooner or later accommodated his style to some

³ Epigram 162, from *The Greek Anthology: Book Eight*, tr. W. R. Paton (London: Heinemann, 1919). The epigram is translated afresh from the Greek.

⁴ This date allows Gregory to be about twenty in 356 when he spent a few months studying under his brother Basil in 356. This would be near the end of the usual age for studies in rhetoric. May, 'Die Chronologie' p. 53, argues against the date of 331 proposed by Tillemont and followed by Aubineau, because an age difference of only one or two years hardly squares with the unqualified reverence Gregory had for his older brother, whom indeed he regarded as 'father', so that henceforth the most appropriate dating of Gregory's birth is between 335–340.

⁵ Basil wrote his *Pros tous neous* for his nephews, sons of his sister(s). He states that he has the closest bonds of nature with them after their parents. Gaudentius of Brescia reports in *Tractatus* 17.15, that during a visit to Caesarea, he met two venerable nuns who gave him relics of the Forty Martyrs which they had received from their maternal uncle (*ab avunculo*), Basil.

⁶ Sozomen *H.E.* 4.24.

⁷ Other dates have been proposed. For arguments supporting this traditional dating, see my *Asketikon* p. 486, n. 1, and my 'The Date of Gangra and a Point of Comparison Between Basil's Small and Great *Asketikon*', forthcoming in *Studia Patristica*.

of these demands, and more likely sooner. Otherwise it is difficult to explain the credit he had in Basil's and Emmelia's family in the early 340s, for he was certainly known to them at this early stage. Basil notes the services he rendered him as a child, and there is other evidence of the family's contact with ascetics of his kind.⁸

In the year 340 Macrina was about 12. Her father made plans for her future betrothal, which, in Christian families of the time would have taken place probably between 15 to 18, with marriage promptly following. But before that time came, the young man chosen as her future betrothed died. At that moment the fire of the young girl's resolve was kindled. She seized on virginity and asceticism for Christ, while claiming the social role of a 'widow', the one state of an unattached woman accorded dignity in pagan Graeco-Roman culture. Nothing her parents said had any effect: she was adamant in her decision. This was the starting point of the remarkable transformations in this family household that were to come.

After Basil Senior died in about 345, Emmelia relocated the family seat to a country estate called Annisa, while maintaining a property portfolio with interests in three provinces.⁹ Annisa was a day's journey from the metropolis, about eight kilometres west of the junction of the rivers Iris and Lycus. It was also about half a day's journey north-west of Ibora and some fourteen days east of Constantinople. High up on the slopes of a ridge, it overlooked the fertile plain of Strabo's *Phanaroea* to the south-east. The *Via Pontica* ran past the villa's front gate and on to the Roman bridge over the Iris. Today the Turkish town of Uluköy ('high town') occupies the site.¹⁰

Basil was the only son old enough to have begun his rhetorical studies under his father. After their father's death, the focus of the boys' formal education shifted to Caesarea of Cappadocia, doubtless because there they had the backup of maternal uncles and family. Basil completed the standard curriculum in Caesarea before Gregory

⁸ Basil, Letter 244, Def. 3.448–51: 'You seemed like one at a loss and amazed, because that very Basil who from childhood (ἐκ παιδός) had ministered (δουλεύσας) to the fellow (Eustathius) in such a way, who had done such and such things on such and such occasions, who had taken up war against thousands because of his care (θεραπείας) for one man—has now become different from what he was'; Letter 291, Def. 4.192–197, to the chorepiscopus Timothy whom the family knew as an immoderate ascetic when Basil was a boy.

⁹ VSM 7.4, GNO 8.1.375–377, Maraval 158–160.

¹⁰ It long maintained toponymic continuity, being known as *Sonnusa* till 1958.

his younger brother ever began his. In about 349 Basil went to Constantinople in quest of further studies. By that year Naucratus was well advanced in his own higher studies, while Gregory was yet to begin his, which would make him perhaps about 13/14 years old at the time.¹¹

Meanwhile at Annisa, Emmelia came into a precious possession: relics of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia. She had a *martyrion* constructed in which to lodge the sacred urn of their ashes, and in which members of her family might be buried. It is around this period, the late 340s or early 350s, that we must place an episode mentioned by Gregory in his *second homily on the Forty Martyrs*. On one occasion when he was a *neos*, a student in his early to mid teens, his mother had urged him to take part in the celebration for the martyrs. But he was preoccupied with other things (his beloved studies?), and only heeded her request very grudgingly. Falling asleep during the vigil he received a monitory vision of the martyrs that reduced him to tears.¹² Their memory seems to have been close to his heart ever after. It is interesting that the highly intellectual Gregory not infrequently shows himself susceptible to prophetic dreams and visions—compare the warning dream he received before he arrived at Annisa to find his sister on her death-bed.

In about 351, Naucratus, at 21 years of age,¹³ on the brink of a career as Christian rhetorician quit it all and chose the life of virginity and asceticism instead. He was his sister's first disciple, and it seems for this reason she esteemed him as her 'dearest brother'. Naucratus and his former slave, Chryssaphius, found a spot in the wooded hills on the river Iris, reasonably accessible to his mother's villa yet still at a distance, and made it their ascetic retreat. But five years later,¹⁴ in the early spring of 356 a tragic accident occurred. While Naucratus was fishing in the river, his feet became entangled

¹¹ See the discussion of Gregory's education by Aubineau, *Traité de la Virginité*, 41–49. At the head of bibliography on Gregory's intellectual formation is Meridier, *L'influence de la seconde sophistique sur l'oeuvre de Gregoire de Nysse*, Paris, 1906.

¹² *On the Forty Martyrs* 2, GNO 10.1, 159–169 at 167–168. Aubineau, *Traité de la Virginité*, p. 51, draws an interesting parallel in the more serious religious crisis being undergone at just that time by another young Christian enamoured of Hellenic culture: the future emperor Julian, confined to the estate of Macellum in Cappadocia from 345 to 351.

¹³ VSM 10.1, GNO 8.1, 378, Maraval 164.

¹⁴ VSM 11.1, GNO 8.1, 379, Maraval 168.

in the nets, and he drowned beneath a sudden onrush of the waters, as Gregory Nazianzen tells us.¹⁵

It was a terrible shock to Emmelia and to the whole family. In fact, it helped precipitate another transformation in the household. Macrina, coming into her spiritual maturity, became spiritual mother to her own mother in this crisis. She used the tragedy to persuade her mother to dispense with the aristocratic manner and to put herself on a level with the virgins of the household and live with them a common life of ascetic endeavour.

Peter, the youngest child, was then about 10 or 11. He was educated at home entirely under Macrina's supervision in a religious spirit and hence was the only one of the brothers who did not follow the traditional course of rhetorical training.

We might sum up briefly the elements that wove themselves into Gregory's character from his family and social background as following:

- The social cachet of the provincial landed aristocracy.
- The culture of hellenism maintained above all through rhetorical studies.
- Family commitment to the Christian faith even to heroic resistance if need be.
- A Christian religious culture in which women played a leading role.
- A Christian *praxis* expressed in hospitality and service of the poor.
- The fostering of links with the local church.
- The cult of the martyrs.
- A Christian intellectual tradition of moderate Origenism.
- A favourable disposition towards the emergent ascetic movement.

YOUNG ADULTHOOD, 356–363

In the summer of 356 Basil abruptly returned from Athens—very possibly in response to the news of Naucratus' death.¹⁶ After consoling his mother and his siblings at Annisa it seems he spent a few months at his old school in Caesarea teaching rhetoric. His younger brother Gregory was a student there. As Gregory tells in **letter 13.4**

¹⁵ Gregory Nazianzen, Epigrams 156, 157 and 158, Book 8 of the Greek Anthology.

¹⁶ In *Or.* 43.24 Gregory Nazianzen tells of the anxiety and haste of Basil's decision to leave.

to *Libanius*, he briefly had Basil as his teacher: 'I was apprenticed to my brother only a short time. I was only sufficiently purified by his divine tongue to be able to discern the deficiency of those uninitiated into discourse'. Gregory would then have been about 19 or 20 years old, in the later stages of his studies.¹⁷ But Gregory for his part was very keen on rhetorical study. Possibly feeling emulous of Basil's greater opportunities he stayed on at Caesarea. Though he did not attend the more famous schools frequented by his brother and by Gregory Nazianzen,¹⁸ and while we do not know the names of his masters apart from Basil, it is certain from a study of his own works that he underwent a thorough and wide training in rhetoric and philosophy, acquiring also the rudiments of science and more than the rudiments of medicine. He read deeply and retentively in Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Plotinus and other platonizing philosophers, Philo of Alexandria and Christian authors, above all Origen. He even won the praise of the great Libanius for his rhetorical skills (**letter 13**).

After this brief stint in Caesarea Basil returned to Annisa for a visit. He found his life suddenly spun around by the timely spiritual intervention of Macrina. She recalled him from the worldly prospects he had been entertaining to Baptism and the Christian ascetic life. He spent the year 357 journeying through Egypt and Palestine apparently on the trail of Eustathius of Sebasteia (Letter 1), noting the way of life of the ascetics in these regions as he went. At Caesarea, whether on the way to or from his journey, he was baptised by Bishop Dianius. From **letter 14** it can be seen that on his way back he passed through Cappadocia. His brother Gregory was there; so also was his friend Gregory who had by then returned from Athens. It is interesting to note the communication between the two Gregorys and no doubt the beginning of their life-long friendship. Both had expressed an interest in whatever philosophic retirement Basil should devise for himself and wanted to meet him to talk about it. Basil, however, was impatient of talk and eager for *praxis*. He did not wait

¹⁷ Libanius accepted students between 15 years and 20 years of age and considered it normal that eight years be spent on the study of rhetoric. See P. Petit, *Les étudiants de Libanius* (Paris, 1957), 139–144, Maraval, *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, 44–45 n. 4.

¹⁸ As Aubineau says (op. cit. 45): 'À défaut de l'auteur, interrogeons son oeuvre'. On p. 48 He quotes a letter of Libanius, 1222 (Förster, 11, 304) full of praise at the high standards of rhetoric attainable in Caesarea of Cappadocia.

around for them to sort out their ideas, but returned to Pontus, where in 358 he commenced his ascetic experiment at the very site left vacant by his brother Naucratus, on the river Iris, in the wooded gorge country north of the long ridge behind Annisa.

With Basil having cast the die in such practical fashion, his brother Gregory finally joined him, as also did Gregory Nazianzen, probably in this same year of 358. Basil attests in **letter 223.5** (Def. 3.302–303) ‘our most God-beloved brother Gregory was present with me, achieving the same goal of life as myself’. In the context we may be reasonably confident Basil is referring to his own brother and not to Nazianzen, for at the time of writing (375/376 AD) he had reason to remind his addressee, Eustathius, of his old familiarity with his brother, currently the victim of Demosthenes’ politics abetted by Eustathius (see below). Moreover, at that early period Basil had often to refer to the two men of the same name in his inmost circle, and he simply distinguished them by using ‘brother’ in the literal sense, as can be seen at the beginning of **letter 14**, and consistently in later letters.¹⁹ Basil might have used ‘brother’ of Nazianzen if they were fellow bishops, but at that stage it was not so.

The evidences are sketchy and allusive, but they are enough to suggest that between 358 to 363 Gregory of Nyssa did in fact participate in some way in the ascetic experiment at the *mone* near Annisa. This means that having finished his studies in Caesarea, Gregory embraced Baptism. That is proved by his undertaking the minor ministry of lector in the liturgy (**Nazianzen’s letter 11**). With all the seriousness attaching to Baptism in that time and in that circle, and, almost as a corollary in his family context, the prospect of the ‘philosophic’ life opened out before him. That implied or pointed to a commitment to celibacy, at least after a demonstrated period of perseverance. Alternatively one might just wonder if he preferred to sojourn at the villa rather than the *mone*, and that Basil is somewhat overstating the position. Still, that mysterious description in his *Eulogy on Basil* of Basil at prayer through the night, and the strange light that seemed to come from his hut, suggests

¹⁹ The phrase ‘our most God-beloved brother, Gregory, the bishop’ in letter 33 is suspect of scribal interpolation. This can only refer to Gregory Nazianzen, since the letter concerns the aftermath of the death of his brother Caesarius, but he was certainly not a bishop then.

something of a personal testimony.²⁰ This may have been what Gregory himself saw in the distant wooded hills of the *mone*.

In addition to his tentative status as an ascetic, Gregory was in line for eventual ordination to the priesthood at the canonical age of 30.²¹ **Nazianzen's letter 11** makes it clear that this was the path on which he was set when it mentions his ordination as a lector. He immersed himself in studying and chanting the scriptures. Meanwhile, at Annisa his father's library was available. The critical study, indeed the selective reading of Origen, as shown in the anthology of the great Alexandrian's *Peri Archon* composed by Basil and Nazianzen at this period, was also part of the younger Gregory's formative experience. The zeal for poverty, manual work and prayer did not mean the cessation of appropriate intellectual endeavour.

The kind of life lived by Basil and the male ascetics in the *mone* on the Iris was as yet on a somewhat freelance, empiric basis. In fact, the working out of a stable and ordered form of cenobitic life in Anatolia, especially for men, was to be the special achievement of the 360s, and its refinement and consolidation the achievement of the 370s. The crucible of these developments was Annisa. It may even be conjectured that a quite concrete event precipitated the final transformation of the Annisa household into a fully constituted monastery, and that was when the time came for Peter, the youngest in the family, to make his profession. We are told in the VSM that Peter never ceased to pursue the spiritual way in which his sister had guided him and that he supported Emmelia and Macrina at every stage of their endeavours.²² In short, he never found cause to leave the villa for the retreat in the wooded hills by the river. When he reached the earliest age suitable for profession, at about 17 years of age, in about 362/3, the household at Annisa had to work out a schema whereby a house for men might be properly incorporated into the entire establishment. Thus the essential features of a comprehensive monastic community were at last put in place. The transformation was crowned by the providential sojourn of Basil there

²⁰ 'At night [Basil] was illumined while at prayer in his house; an immaterial light filled the house by divine power which had no material source.' Gregory attests a little later: 'We know that he often entered the darkness where God resided' [cf. Ex 20.21], *In Basilium Fratrem* GNO 10.1, 127.

²¹ According to the 11th canon of the council of Neocaesarea (315).

²² VSM 14.4–5, GNO 8.1, 384, Maraval 184.

from 363–365, when he toured, preached and taught among the ascetic communities of Pontus. The fruit of this period was Basil's *Small Asketikon*, which was later much enlarged as the *Great Asketikon*. The *Small Asketikon* reveals that the essential elements of the way of life at Annisa attested in the VSM are already in place by the mid 360s. So the final shift from family villa to proto-monastic community probably took place around the time of Peter's profession in the early 360s.

Eustathius of Sebasteia continued to stop at the family villa at Annisa whenever he travelled to and from Constantinople, since it was a convenient day's journey from Neocaesarea along the *Via Pontica*, and this was a family worth cultivating by any serious church politician. Basil and his friends would come over to the villa for long discussions with the spiritual leader, as Basil himself reminds Eustathius in a passage of **Letter 223.5**.

The association with Eustathius had other consequences. The idea of Christian ascetic life promoted by him had a distinct social component and supported engagement with the Church at large. Eustathius was a metropolitan bishop anyway, and this meant for Basil, and for Gregory of Nyssa, an entrée to Church affairs, initially through his homoiousian connections. In one of those all too brief autobiographical morsels, we learn that Gregory was present along with Basil at the unhappy Council of Constantinople in 360: 'But if he speaks of the events at Constantinople . . . we would display the reason why, though present on the occasion, we did not plunge into the fight.'²³ A passing comment this, but it confirms that in 360, Gregory was in Basil's—and Eustathius'—company,²⁴ and had sampled for himself the full rigour of contemporary doctrinal strife and church politics.

But there is something more. Not only Eustathius, but this entire homoiousian circle had a particular interest in the ascetic life.²⁵ There is confirmation of this in *On Virginity* 22, where, without naming him, Gregory mentions that he has listened to a physician discourse on the four elements of the human body. By all indications the man was Basil of Ancyra, a trained physician and a leading homoiousian

²³ *Contra Eunomium* 1.82 GNO 1.50; NPNF ser. 2, 5.43.

²⁴ One may suppose that in journeying to this Council, Eustathius paused as usual at Annisa, but this time continued with Basil and Gregory in his entourage.

²⁵ This topic is canvassed at length by Elm, 'Virgins of God', 106–136.

bishop, and the occasion was the council of 360. Gregory seems to have heard him reading his *On true virginity*,²⁶ which canvasses the very same topic.²⁷

The evidence is clear enough that around the year 360 Gregory was frequenting Annisa and moving in Basil's circle and, through Eustathius of Sebasteia, had entrée into Homoiousian circles. He was being initiated into their theological and ecclesial concerns, and participating in their ascetic interests.

GREGORY CHOOSES A SECULAR CAREER, 364

If we saw the hint of a religious crisis in Gregory's youth, an impulse of adolescent rebellion perhaps, Gregory underwent a more serious religious crisis in the mid 360s. Despite his beginnings in a life oriented to asceticism and the clerical path, **Nazianzen's letter 11** makes it clear that Gregory at some stage chose instead to follow a secular career. The context of such a decision is the Emperor Julian's famous law of 17 June 362, which forbade the rhetorical profession to Christians, and after Julian's death in July 363, its abrogation on 11 January 364 under Jovian,²⁸ when the rhetorical profession once again became possible for Christians. This gives us a *terminus a quo* for Gregory's decision for a change of life-style. It would not have taken place during Julian's time, because in his **letter 11**, Nazianzen does not suggest Gregory's apostasy from the faith, though no doubt a lurking suspicion of it contributed to the scandal his decision evoked.

When he wrote this letter Gregory Nazianzen appears to having been visiting Basil, Macrina, Peter and the monastic community at Annisa in the period of 363–365. These were the very years Basil had withdrawn from the presbyterate of Eusebius of Caesarea. Paradoxically, Basil had but lately come north from Cappadocia, whereas his brother Gregory now went in the reverse direction. No doubt Gregory Nazianzen, in sending **letter 11**, hoped that the younger Gregory would be more likely to listen to an older friend than to his own siblings—whose spokesman to some extent he was. But

²⁶ PG 30 669–809; attributed falsely to St Basil.

²⁷ *On Virginity* 22. See Aubineau, *Traité de la Virginité*, pp. 137–142 and notes, 513.

²⁸ *Codex Theodos.* 13.3.5–6, ed. Th. Mommsen and P. M. Meyer 1.2 (Berlin, 1954), 741–742.

despite the conjectures of commentators such as Tillemont,²⁹ there is no evidence that his remonstrance had any effect whatever. Gregory continued in the profession of rhetoric in Caesarea until he became a bishop.

One might speculate on the motives of Gregory's decision. It is surely significant that in 364 he would have been in his late twenties, the canonical age for ordination to the presbyterate at 30 years looming near. Perhaps the very approach to such a moment helped precipitate the crisis. With the resurgence of the Anomoian theological party in Julian's reign, there was even more doctrinal turbulence in the Church than before if possible—an outcome deliberately compassed by Julian. Gregory of Nyssa, who, as we have seen, had witnessed the distasteful council of Constantinople in 360, may have had little stomach for facing even more such turmoil at this stage, for it is certain that engagement in it would have been expected of him if he had become a priest, given his education, social standing and the church circles in which he moved.

Socially Julian had stirred up an enthusiasm for traditional Hellenism—a sort of neo-conservatism or archaism—and this movement remained *au courant* for some time after his death.³⁰ Gregory allowed himself to be caught up in this enthusiasm at precisely this moment. His comments to Libanius in **letter 13.4** may be taken to describe his dispositions in 364: 'I devoted myself assiduously to the whole course of study and became enamoured of the beauty that is yours [i.e. Rhetoric]'.

Gregory Nazianzen however suggests a more worldly motive: ambition, and this may be close to the mark. Perhaps the younger Gregory still felt somewhat disadvantaged by the greater opportunities enjoyed by his brother and by Nazianzen himself, and felt he had something to prove. The inchoate monastic life for men in which he had dabbled was not yet on a firm canonical basis, and there were examples to hand of baptised celibates pursuing secular careers, beginning with Caesarius. When the opportunity presented itself (an invitation from his old school?), he took, in a sense, the line of least resistance,

²⁹ Tillemont, *Mémoires* 9.564. Aubineau, op. cit., p. 78, remarks that Tillemont was affected by the contemporary concerns of Vincent de Paul and Ollier for the adequate training of candidates for the priesthood.

³⁰ See the comments of Aubineau, op. cit., p. 64.

and one very congenial for one so attracted to Hellenism. He stepped aside from the path to the priesthood and decided to follow his father's example and become a professor of rhetoric. And so Gregory commenced the life of a teacher of the higher curriculum, only not in Neocaesarea, but in Caesarea.

Nevertheless, Gregory was far from renouncing his Christian faith and perhaps, at least initially, his commitment to celibacy, but proposed to combine his religious faith with participation in civil life and a secular career. Publicly, he would cut the figure of a Christian rhetor. Spiritually he would be something of a 'monk in the world', to use later terms.

Contemporary examples of Christian rhetors were Prohaeresius in Athens and Marius Victorinus in Rome, and of course, in an earlier generation there was the example of Basil of Neocaesarea, Gregory's own father.

As to a 'monk in the world', the writings of the Cappadocian fathers yield some interesting examples of would-be secular ascetics. The outstanding case is Caesarius, Gregory Nazianzen's brother. In fact Gregory wrote two letters to his brother at widely spaced intervals, each revealing sentiments similar to those of **letter 11** to Gregory of Nyssa. Compare Nazianzen Letter 7, written during the reign of Emperor Julian, in which he anxiously warns his brother Caesarius, who was then as Gregory of Nyssa became, a baptised celibate in a secular profession (a physician), but whose faith was at risk in the current circumstances. Compare also letter 20, written in 368, in which he implores Caesarius to quit the secular life altogether. Compare also Basil's Letter 26 to Caesarius (Def. 1.155).

In letter 116, Basil writes to Firminus in the army, enquiring after his *asceticism* (Def. 2.233). Firminus in his reply, Letter 117 (Def. 2.235) speaks of keeping his 'virginity'.

The trajectory of the young Amphilochius, a nephew of Gregory Nazianzen, shows aspects similar to those of Gregory's course. He was a devout Christian and professional man (a lawyer) who desired to turn to the ascetic life, and was persuaded to put himself under Basil's direction; he eventually became bishop of Iconium and the great confidant of Basil's final years.

Gregory's case differs from the above in that he took up the life of a secular ascetic *after* he had already lived in a quasi-monastic setting and was disposing himself for priesthood. Yet even here there is a curious parallel. Gregory Nazianzen's letter 177 to Eudoxius

precisely addresses a man who appears to have adopted a career in rhetoric after having previously been in monastic life.

Gregory then, did not abandon his Christian profession or perhaps, at least to begin with, his celibate commitment. Nevertheless, it was a state in life which put a whole-hearted dedication to spiritual progress under severe stress, to say the least. Spiritually speaking, he did not find himself equal to the proposal, he was barely marking time, he was in a spiritual backwater. We have his own word for it in his comments on his own situation in *On Virginity*, especially chapter 3, of which more in the next two sections.

Some further beckoning call, some impetus from without was needed for Gregory's inner reawakening. His brother Peter suggests something of what happened in **letter 30.6**: 'now however, you show such good will towards him [Basil] who led you to the light through his spiritual travail'. Whatever other factors and personal influences were at work, Basil at any rate, was certainly instrumental in Gregory's spiritual regeneration. It is one of the great providential chain of events, that Basil's election as bishop in Caesarea created just the circumstances that made it possible for Gregory of Nyssa, then practising rhetoric in Caesarea, to be recalled to a higher purpose. Indeed, Gregory was in a sense, spiritually reborn twice, as he committed himself to a religious vocation again, a more remarkable grace than if he had never lapsed at all from his earlier purpose.

WAS GREGORY MARRIED?

In order to discuss Gregory's life in the period 364–372, it is necessary to face a question already discussed by church writers and scholars for some centuries: was Gregory of Nyssa married or unmarried?

There are two primary texts in favour of the case that Gregory was married:

- *On Virginity* 3 where Gregory described himself as cut off by a gulf from the glory of virginity.
- **Gregory Nazianzen's letter 197**, written to console the younger Gregory on the death of Theosebia, his *syzygos*, or 'yolk-fellow'.

On the question of Theosebia's identity, see the study of the sources in the notes prefacing **Nazianzen's letter 197** in this volume. The

conclusion there is unambiguous: Theosebia was *not* Gregory's wife, but his own sister, a virgin ascetic in Macrina's mould who lived in close association with him at Nyssa.

The whole question therefore comes down to the evidence of *On Virginity* 3.

This is very fitting, since *On Virginity* marks the end of the phase of Gregory's life under discussion, being written in 371.³¹ We might hope that it affords some hints of Gregory's preoccupations and experiences in the years immediately preceding and we shall find that an in-depth reading does not disappoint. The strongest evidence that Gregory was married is in the following passage:

But as things are, my knowledge of the beauties of virginity (τῶν τῆς παρθενίας καλῶν) is in some measure sterile and useless to me as is the grain to the muzzled ox (1 Cor 9.9–10) which goes round and round the threshing floor, or a waterfall to the thirsty if the water cannot be reached. Blessed are they who are in a position to choose the better things and are not debarred by having previously chosen the common life (τῷ κοινῷ προληφθέντες βίῳ), as we have done, who are hindered from the glory of virginity (τὸ τῆς παρθενίας κάχημα) as by a gulf, to which one cannot return once one has set one's foot on the path of the worldly life (τῷ κοσμικῷ βίῳ). So we are but spectators of the beauties that belongs to others and witnesses of the blessedness of others. And even if we come to some fitting conception of virginity, we experience the same as the cooks and attendants who flavour the table-fare of the rich, but do not themselves partake of what they have prepared. How blessed if it were not so, if we had not come to recognize the beauty through reflection all too late. But as things are, they are the truly enviable who realise what is beyond all prayer and desire, who are not excluded from the power of enjoying these goods.³²

Other passages in *On Virginity* also tell against celibacy for Gregory. In the letter prefacing the treatise, Gregory twice refers to the difficulties of 'the more common life' (τοῦ κοινοτέρου βίου), those engagements in worldly activities that hinder attention to the more divine life. But when he proposes models who can show the way to

³¹ Daniélou has questioned this ('Chronologie', p. 159), considering that though in the prefatory letter Gregory refers to Basil as 'our most God-beloved bishop and father', this does not exclude his being a bishop himself, and citing Basil's reference to their uncle Gregory in letter 58. Still, Gregory as a practicing rhetorician addressing students best fits the context of this letter. Gregory did revise his work later when he was a bishop.

³² GNO 8.1, 247–343 at 256.

attain ‘true virginity’, he immediately refers to the unmarried (ἀγαμία) or celibate saints, some of them still living—notably and specifically his brother Basil. In short, choosing marriage or not is a point of departure in the spiritual project of which he speaks. In chapter 1 he does not elide over bodily virginity in favour of the higher virginity, but insists on the ‘incorruption’ and ‘purity’ that are proper to the bodily state alone. In chapter 2 he speaks of ‘the immaculate Mary’ (as he does several times in the treatise) through whose quite bodily virginity—her ‘incorruption’ or physical integrity—‘the fullness of divinity shone forth in Christ’, also in concrete fashion. In Chapter 3, as we have seen, he says that he himself is cut off from ‘the boast of virginity’ by having committed himself to the ‘worldly life’. But when he begins to detail what ‘this burdensome way of life’ entails, he immediately speaks of marriage. All these resonances mean that he himself is involved in this primary element of ‘the worldly life’ of the passage cited above, ‘the more common life’, i.e. the choice of marriage. He considers himself disqualified from ‘the boast of virginity’, not simply because his secular career keeps him distracted from spiritual realities, but because he forsook virginity of body by choosing to marry instead.

With longer experience and upon reflection, he perceives all too late the beauty of the ideal he had observed lived at close quarters by his sisters Macrina and Theosebia, and his brothers Basil, Naucratus and Peter. Indeed he had tentatively participated in it. He now feels the full force of his season of refusal, he realises the obtuseness and dullness of his lapse of spiritual vision that made such a decision possible.

Confirmation that the argument of *On Virginity* 3 points to Gregory’s married status is found in the critical edition of *On Virginity*.³³ The editor, Cavarnos, ultimately grouped the three text families and the independent manuscripts into two streams of tradition. One stream, to which most manuscripts belong, contains a full apparatus of prefatory letter, a numbered index of chapters with chapter titles, and chapter-titles in the body of the text. The other stream originally had none of these elements, and seems only to have begun some way into the current text of Chapter 1, preceded by a brief general

³³ John P. Cavarnos (ed.), *De Virginitate*, GNO 8.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), Preface 217–246, Text 247–343.

text suitable as a general introduction. One manuscript 'S',³⁴ shows the shorter text with later elements such as uneven chapter titles and division of the work that crept in from scribal notes in the margin that had been copied later from a manuscript of the fuller version.

Seeking an explanation for the discrepancies, Cavarnos considered two possibilities: 1. There was at first just one text, later altered by scribes, resulting in two distinct traditions of text, *or* 2. There were in fact two editions of the work by the author himself. He concluded in favour of the second explanation: the additions and alterations that make up the longer version come from Gregory himself. Not the least of the reasons are that these elements are so much in his style. This can be seen, for example, in the way the index of chapters is introduced after the prefatory letter, using familiar elements of Gregory's vocabulary:

ἡ δὲ ἀκολουθία τῶν νοημάτων ἐστὶν αὕτη: This is the sequence of thoughts/conceptions.

But most to the point, and confirming our reading of *On Virginity* is the title to Chapter 3. Since these are the words of Gregory they put the matter beyond all doubt:

γ'. Μνήμη τῶν ἐκ τοῦ γάμου δυσχερῶν καὶ ἔνδειξις τοῦ τὸν γεγραφότα τὸν λόγον μὴ ἄγαμον εἶναι: 3. 'A reminder of the difficulties of marriage and proof that the writer of the treatise is not unmarried.

FURTHER SOUNDINGS IN *ON VIRGINITY*

Gregory then, was definitely married, though not to Theosebia. With these co-ordinates in place, we press on with our enquiry. Further soundings in *On Virginity* yield some valuable hints, but from this point on, we pass increasingly from concrete evidence to possibilities and probabilities. We are in the realm of informed guesswork.

In estimating the timing and tenor of Gregory's marriage, we have a few considerations to go by. His ascetic sister Theosebia must be allowed to have spent some considerable time with him at Nyssa for

³⁴ Codex Vaticanus graecus 1907, parchment, of the 13th century. The text of this manuscript is closest to the text of the printed edition first published by A. Morell in Paris in 1638, and republished by Migne, *PG* 46, 317 ff. There are, of course, no index of chapters and no chapter titles.

her to be lamented in the mid 380s as his companion. She would surely never have been thought of in this capacity if his wife had still been his companion. Gregory's wife, therefore, must have died sooner rather than later—but how soon? Although arguments from silence are dangerous, specially with the paucity of writing from Gregory's earlier period, there is never a mention of her in his or the other Cappadocians' works, certainly not in *On Virginity* even though he had occasion to let it be known that he had in fact forsaken celibacy. If his wife were still alive at the time of this treatise, it is difficult to imagine her listening with equanimity to this first foray of her husband into the literary life, with his harrowing treatment of the trials of married life and the spiritual obstacles inherent in it, and her own complete anonymity. What would she make of her husband's essay of such a topic? How would it help build up their marriage? Would she pass it off lightly as the foolish exaggerations required by rhetorical art and none of it really meant, of course? No, the general tenor and context of the treatise makes much more sense if we suppose that the author was already a widower.

Since *On Virginity* is Gregory's earliest extant work, one might attempt to dredge it for a few more clues as to what might have happened in the years immediately preceding. A sensitive reading elicits some interesting pointers.

Just as in the prefatory letter he refers clearly to Basil without expressly naming him, and in *On Virginity* 20 rehearses implicitly the spiritual history of his own family and of Macrina herself, so it is possible to discern in the later part of *On Virginity* 23 a series of implicit allusions to Basil, Macrina, Peter—and himself. That he first points to Basil as the living model of the monastic life and the spiritual father par excellence is perfectly clear. But, he says, if this example is too lofty, look at the 'chorus of saints' around him. He then refers to the young who have anticipated old age by their steadfast and vigorous love of wisdom rather than of bodily pleasures, because they listened to the one who said of Wisdom (a feminine figure), *she is the tree of life to those who grasp her* (Prov 3.18). It seems that Peter here is the living example of what he means, and that his brother's preceptress, Macrina, is implicitly accorded the role of Wisdom:³⁵ 'Sailing through the waves of youth with that tree as if

³⁵ The sketch of the two in VSM 14 (GNO 8.1, 383–384, Maraval, 180–184) fully backs up such an interpretation.

on a raft, they have moored in the harbour of God's will, and now, in tranquillity and calm, their soul is not washed by the waves'.

But then Gregory comes to his own case: 'Why (the Greek adds untranslatably a first person singular datives $\mu\omicron\tau$) are you so curious about some who have had intentions along these lines but faltered, and why, for this reason, do you despair as if the project were impossible?' Due to its position in the sequence of examples this is manifestly a description of his own case. If so, it means that Gregory himself was one who initially undertook the same ideal as lived in so exemplary a fashion by Basil and Macrina, and by the young Peter, but that he defaulted from his original purpose.

This theme of regret for an earlier high ideal now lost recurs several times through the work. Notwithstanding Gregory's rhetorical aims, some passages seem invested with a personal note.³⁶ One in particular is suggestive of what may well have happened in his own case. He speaks vividly of the death of a wife and child, or at least of the wife during her first labour, and of the plight of the husband so unexpectedly bereaved. While there may be an element of rhetorical *furor* in the tableaux presented by Gregory, nevertheless, the art seems to clothe a core of deep feeling:

Still burning with affection, still at the peak of desire, without having experienced the sweetest things of life, one is suddenly bereft as in a nightmare. And after this? One is besieged by relatives as if by the enemy. Now, instead of a bridal chamber, death has provided a tomb. There are foolish shouts and the wringing of hands, recollections of one's former life, curses against those who advised the marriage, complaints against friends who did not prevent it.³⁷

³⁶ In Aubineau's assessment any reading of a personal note in *On Virginity* is an 'erreur d'interpretation' (*Traité de la Virginité* p. 96). If one could sum up his Chapter II, 'Rhétorique et diatribe dans un plaidoyer pour la virginité' (83–96), nothing in what Gregory says in *On Virginity* is necessarily sincere or offers a clue to his own dispositions and experiences; it is an exercise in staged rhetorical pleading. The content of the treatise is determined entirely by rhetorical *genre*. Gregory lacks moderation and indulges too quickly in the conventions of *pathos*. After tracing the theme 'should one marry?' in late philosophers and early Christian writers, Aubineau concludes (96): 'il plaide sur un thème d'emprunt qu'il développe manifestement sans conviction.'

Needless to say, the approach here strongly dissents from such a time-worn reductionist critique. Gregory is not such a *topoi* driven paragon of artful insincerity even while exercising rhetorical skill.

³⁷ *On Virginity* 3, GNO 8.1, 261, Callahan 16.

What can ‘recollections of one’s former life’ mean? The following passage is suggestive, though it may not compass Gregory’s case in detail:

We ourselves have known many, who, from their earliest age, appeared especially to be lovers of moderation (ἐραστὰς μάλιστα τῆς σωφροσύνης), but whose participation in seemingly lawful and permissible pleasures became the beginning of life on a low level. For once they have admitted such an experience, then, as in our analogy of the stream, the desirable (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν) is wholly changed for them; they alter the direction of their thought from the more divine to the lowly and the material and open up for themselves a wide channel for the passions . . .³⁸

At the very end of *On Virginity* 13 σωφρόσυνη (moderation) refers to sexual continence and specifically dedicated virginity (in a passage that fairly describes Macrina’s spiritual motherhood). Hence the passage in *On Virginity* 9 describes one who in youth was disposed towards vocational celibacy, but who later, little by little, through recourse to legitimate pleasures, fell from this early spiritual promise.

If we are right to discern some personal quality amid these rhetorical set pieces, and given that we have already established that Gregory’s wife must have died sooner than later then it seems more than possible that Gregory himself experienced some kind of dire misfortune in his married life. When he begins to detail the handicaps of marriage in *On Virginity* 3 he expresses above all an overpowering sense of the precariousness that hangs over the promise of this earthly happiness. Again and again he speaks of the ‘sudden reversals’ (ἄθρόως ταῖς μεταβολαῖς), and the ‘reversal of fortune’ (τῆς μεταβολῆς) that mock human expectations. ‘If only it were possible to know the things of experience before we experience them!’ he laments. Towards the end of this chapter is an appeal that, however diffused as a general statement in the plural, refers patently to himself:

If you want to learn the disadvantages of the more common life, listen to what they say who know this life through experience, how they bless the life of those who chose a life in virginity from the beginning and did not belatedly learn through misfortune (διὰ συμφορᾶς) which was the better.

Later, in *On Virginity* 14, in speaking of the kinds of misfortune (τῶν συμφορῶν) that beset marriage—most of them involving death—he concludes: ‘The longed-for delights and joys and pleasures and

³⁸ *On Virginity* 9 GNO 8.1, 287, Callahan 35.

whatever else is hoped for in marriage come to an end in such pains as these (ταῖς τοιαύταις ὀδυναῖς).

If such a calamity came upon Gregory's married life, as seems possible if not probable, it brought to a premature end for him the promise of earthly marriage. What is noteworthy, he had already experienced it by the time of writing in 370/371.

A better idea of Gregory's situation as he wrote *On Virginity* is now possible. Firstly, for whom was he writing? In the prefatory letter he describes his work as 'advice to the young (τοὺς νέους) to follow in the footsteps of one who has gone before them'—namely Basil, just referred to as 'our most reverend bishop and father'. The work therefore, is a *protreptic* aimed at persuading young men to adopt the life of virginity for the Lord—and not just any young men, but above all Christian students in the schools of rhetoric in Caesarea. They may not be quite ready for the strong meat of Basil's *Asketikon* and his detailed provisions for life in the monastic communities, but that is the direction in which Gregory wishes to nudge them.

It might even be possible to discern Gregory's purpose more closely. The work ends with much talk of the priesthood, and we are perhaps somewhat startled at the recourse to Exodus 19.15 which encourages sexual abstinence as a preparation for theophany, and then Exodus 19.22 which applies the practice to priests. Gregory is targeting his own students who might be thinking of enrolling themselves in the clergy for eventual ordination. But instead of their marrying in the meantime, he wants to attract them to the ideal of virginity for the Lord, and that not in any freelance fashion, but under the guidance of the way of life over of which Basil is the acknowledged master, the life of the monastic communities. He plays the same role as Basil himself toward the disillusioned young lawyer Amphilochius in Letter 150.

But most interestingly, Gregory in some way associates himself in the same ascetic purpose—which makes all the more sense if he is a widower renegotiating his own spiritual path.³⁹ This at any rate

³⁹ Is it possible for someone *not* to be a virgin physically and yet make progress in *parthenia*? That seems to be implied in VSM 30.2 (GNO 8.1.401–402, Maraval, 234), in the case of the noble widow Vetiana, who 'made the great Macrina the guardian and guide of her widowhood, and stayed much of her time with the virgins, learning from them the life of virtue'. The interesting thing is that a few lines later, this school of virtue is called the 'chorus of *parthenia*'.

seems to be the drift of such passages as the following in *On Virginity* 23. Observe the recurring first person plural:

For examples of the benefits of this life of ours (τὴν ζώην ἡμῶν) are not lacking. Indeed now especially, if ever, its dignity is flourishing and taking root in our life (ἐπιχωριάζει τῇ βίῳ ἡμῶν), being made accurate in the highest degree by gradual additions to it,⁴⁰ so that it is possible to walk in such footsteps and have a share in it, and, following after the scent of the perfume, to be filled with the fragrance of Christ . . . Look to him [Basil] as your rule of life (τὸν κανόνα τοῦ βίου). God has made him as a model for our life (τέθεικε σκοπὸν ὁ Θεὸς τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ζωῇ).

Finally, notwithstanding Gregory's recurring sense of having defaulted from the better choice, he shows in these pages a remarkable maturity of spiritual insight and discourse. We should not be deceived by the status of *On Virginity* as a 'juvenile work' or by his own self-deprecations. Gregory here is no beginner in rhetorical discourse or in Christian thinking. Somehow, he has maintained or picked up again the spiritual thread though a series of life's mistakes, setbacks and shocks—through his early gravitation to the ascetic life and to eventual ordination, his season of great refusal, his switch to a secular career and to marriage, the experience of some sharp grief in his married life, and so on up to the present moment. This man has suffered.

Moreover the treatise shows him already displaying great rhetorical power, well armed with Plato and other philosophers thoroughly digested; he is already possessed of a deep religious spirit, steeped in 'the holy books', able to propose a well thought-out religious anthropology in support of virginity for the Lord. He integrates his experience of sexuality as a married man by his affirmation of 'the erotic power'. For him it is a supremely valuable gift that only begs to be steered to its highest end. Then the soul will reach out without ceasing towards the ultimate and incomparable beauty of God. He has caught the spiritual élan again, or perhaps now, for the first time. Here in his first work, the mystical themes that he will develop in a consistent pattern many years hence are already present as germinating seeds.

⁴⁰ This refers to the ongoing additions to Basil's *Asketikon*, as a result of subsequent question and answer sessions in the communities.

GREGORY'S MARRIAGE: A SCENARIO

It is time to synthesize from the evidences, possibilities and probabilities considered above a scenario for Gregory's marriage.

Firstly, early in 364 Gregory departed Annisa in Pontus for Caesarea in Cappadocia on a wave of enthusiasm for traditional Hellenism. There he would pursue a career as a professor of the higher curriculum. He had every intention of maintaining his Christian faith, and insofar as he was already committed to the ascetic life in Pontus, perhaps he persuaded himself that he could continue as a secular ascetic like Caesarius. It did not take long however for this somewhat invidious situation to be worn down. The passage cited above where he pictures the bereaved husband ruing those who had persuaded him to marry or did not prevent the marriage is suggestive. His maternal family in Cappadocia seems unlikely to have favoured marriage over asceticism. Recall that the young Emmelia's aspiration to virginity was not supported by her guardians.⁴¹ In one of those painful episodes of family strife, his uncle Gregory the bishop was no supporter of Basil the teacher of ascetics in his election as of metropolitan bishop.⁴²

In this connection it is worth recalling Basil's provision of the first specific vow of virginity/celibacy for male ascetics in *Longer Responses* 15, which may be dated to c. 370, and the penance he proposes for the forswearing of celibacy by monks in letter 199, Canon 19,⁴³ where he held it equivalent to the sin of fornication, and in letter 217⁴⁴ written in c. 376, where he treated it more seriously as equivalent to the offence of forsworn virgins, i.e. adultery. Basil was responsible for elevating the profession of celibacy by male ascetics from its earlier more empiric status to the echelon of an ecclesiastically witnessed, canonically recognized state in life equivalent to that of professed virgins. The private commitment of secular male ascetics had no particular standing in the church. Only they would be recognized who made their vow properly in the context of a monastic community. One may wonder whether the experience of his own brother may have contributed to this elaboration of a discipline of vows for monks. It would appear that if Gregory had once been

⁴¹ VSM 2.2, GNO 8.1.371–372, Maraval 142–143.

⁴² See Basil letters 60, 58.

⁴³ Deferrari 3.111.

⁴⁴ Deferrari 3.251.

implicitly committed to celibacy, it was under the freelance regime of male ascetics of earlier times, a regime that was now obsolete, at least where Basil's reforming influence was in the ascendant.

Gregory then established his career and married, possibly late in 364 or in the spring of 365. Tragedy soon followed however, and it is a fair guess that his wife, whose name we shall never know, died at her first confinement, which we might tentatively date to late 365/366. It is uncertain whether, as in the graphic description in *On Virginity* 3, the child also died. If not, it might be possible to admit Daniélou's suggestion after all and consider Cynegius as his natural son and date his birth accordingly. Gregory met Libanius in Antioch in 379 and almost certainly broached the possibility of his taking on Cynegius as a student who was then approaching the age for higher studies. **Letters 13 and 14** show a situation in 380/381 where Cynegius has commenced his studies under Libanius. If we put his age in 380 at about 14/15 years, that would date his birth to about 365/366.⁴⁵

GOADS AND TRANSITIONS, 365–372

If one takes the point of view of the Hound of Heaven, there were other goads to Gregory's spirit during this phase of his life which kept him mindful of a higher spiritual purpose.

When Gregory went down to Caesarea he left Basil behind as the preacher and promoter of the ascetic life in Pontus. It was a moment rich with ironies when he found his masterful brother returning to Caesarea at the end of 365 as bishop Eusebius' right hand man. Gregory observed Basil increasingly assume the leadership of the church under Eusebius, inculcating the care of the poor and hospitality to strangers, guiding and promoting the ascetic communities, and addressing the doctrinal problems of the church by organising what can now be called the Neo-nicene front among the bishops of Eastern Anatolia and Syria.

From about 369 onwards a series of events fostered renewed contacts with his other ascetic siblings in Annisa. The first of these was

⁴⁵ According to P. Petit, *Les étudiants de Libanius* (Paris, 1957), 139–144, Libanius took students between about 15–20 years old. Intriguingly, in the years 388–389 Libanius had another student called Cynegius, p. 57.

the severe famine that beset central Anatolia in about 369 or 370. There are several hints of exchanges between Pontus and Cappadocia at this period, such as Basil's two sermons on the famine and his mission to disturb the wealthy into Christian generosity towards their poor, taken together with the prominent role played by the monastery at Annisa at that period. Peter organised famine relief⁴⁶ and Macrina in particular left her seclusion to scour the roadsides for abandoned children.⁴⁷ Gregory himself tells us of these episodes. Twice he had cause to recall Basil's toils to provide relief through the famine, in his *Eulogy on Basil*⁴⁸ and *Contra Eunomium* 1.103.⁴⁹

Also at 'about that time', more precisely, in mid September 370, Basil was elected bishop to succeed Eusebius.⁵⁰ It was an interesting position for Gregory to find himself in: he a prominent Christian rhetorician in the secular schools of Caesarea, and his brother the new metropolitan bishop. Basil appears to have promptly advanced Peter to the presbyterate, which event must also have given Gregory pause for thought. From all these influences but from Basil in particular, the pressure on Gregory subtly and not so subtly worked, a pressure beckoning him towards wholesale commitment to service of the church. Here the historical obscurity lifts a little and we can verify a few features of this period.

Gregory had acquired his own dignity and social status as a sought after professor of rhetoric in Caesarea. Basil recognized his brother's gifts and the excellent qualities of his person and wished they might be put to serve the Church's needs. Basil's esteem for his brother can be traced in remarks sprinkled throughout his early letters, not the least in the very Letter which otherwise is no great monument to brotherly concord: **letter 58**, the only communication of Basil to Gregory that has survived.

⁴⁶ VSM 14.6, GNO 8.1.384, Maraval 184.

⁴⁷ VSM 28.5, GNO 8.1.401, Maraval 232.

⁴⁸ GNO 10.1, 122.

⁴⁹ GNO 1, 57.

⁵⁰ Gregory Nazianzen, in *Oration* 43.36–37 follows his account of Basil's labours during the famine with Basil's episcopal election. The sequence of the narrative means either that the famine immediately preceded that event, or that it was still in progress. The latter is more likely, to judge from Basil's letter 31 to Eusebius of Samosata, written in early-mid 371, where he mentions that 'the famine has not yet released us', suggesting that it was in its later stages and that recruitment of resources was underway.

Basil shrewdly read Gregory's character at this stage, and we have his famous remarks on the 'naïveté' and 'simplicity' of his brother's sense of politics. In **letter 215.3** Basil pictures to himself what a meeting between Pope Damasus of Rome and Gregory as an envoy might be like, and decides to retire the thought from service. Basil's worry over Gregory's aptitude as a man of affairs is confirmed by Macrina's comments on Gregory's current prominence, as Gregory tells it against himself in the VSM: 'Do you not recognise the cause of such great blessings, that the prayers of your parents are lifting you on high, since you have nothing in you, or very little, to prepare you for this?'⁵¹ Poor Gregory, caught in a sort of spiritual pincer movement between the likes of Basil on the one hand and Macrina and Peter on the other. He had little prospect of being left to paddle in the spiritual shallows.

Then, again at 'about that time' their mother, Emmelia, died, i.e. in late 370 or early 371.⁵² Such a family watershed occasioned visits to Annisa and exchanges with Macrina, Peter and the monks and virgins there. In **letter 19** he fervently and sincerely calls Macrina a 'mother in place of my mother', which surely means that his sister used the grief of the moment to steer her brother to higher spiritual realities, just as she had once done with Emmelia herself after the shock of Naucratus' death. Gregory came to Annisa, saw with chastened eyes, listened with fresh ears, and pondered.

Basil began to have some success in enlisting his brother's gifts. It is from this period, in the year between Basil's accession to the episcopate and Gregory's own episcopate that Gregory's first work survives: *On Virginity*, discussed at length above, written in the interval between the first and the later editions of Basil's *Asketikon*. Gregory's thoughts on his own spiritual situation had been maturing through the events of the past few years, and they culminated in this work, which marked for him personally a moment of passage. It synthesizes the fruits of his observations at Annisa in recent years and of spiritual conversations with his sister Macrina. She is the living ideal

⁵¹ VSM 23.4, GNO 8.1, 392, Maraval 212–213.

⁵² See Basil, letter 30 to Eusebius of Samosata, written in early-mid 371. Emmelia must have died then between Eusebius' presence at Basil's election in September 370, and Basil's correspondence with Eusebius after the long winter of 370–371. If Emmelia was about 17/18 when she gave birth to Macrina in c. 327, she was about 60/61 when she died.

of *parthenia* that underpins the discourse. Once the reader is alerted to the possibility, allusions to his sister quietly shine from the page. The work is a reprise of the spiritual transformations of the family household at Annisa under his sister's guidance. In the following passage Gregory rereads the spiritual history of his own family and re-educates himself about the whole meaning of family as he does so, by looking at Macrina:

The person courting a spiritual marriage will, *through the renewal of his mind* (Eph 4.22–23), first show himself young and without any sign of age. Next he will show that he is from a wealthy family, but wealthy in the way that is most desirable, a family respected not because of its earthly possessions, but because of the abundance of its heavenly treasures. Such a person will not pride himself on having a family that is looked up to because of the good fortune which comes willy-nilly to many, even to the foolish, but the good fortune that comes from the toil and effort of one's own accomplishments, which only they achieve who are *sons of the light* (1 Thess 5.5) and *children of God* (cf. Jn 1.12) and called well-born *from the risings of the sun* (Is 41.25), through their illuminated deeds. He will not busy himself with his bodily strength or his appearance or with exercising his body or fattening his flesh, but quite the opposite; he will perfect the power of the spirit in the weakness of the body. I know the dowry in this wedding does not consist of corruptible things but of what is given us as a gift from the special wealth of the soul . . . It is clear that the eagerness for this kind of marriage is common to men and women alike, for since, as the apostle says: *There is neither male nor female* (Gal 3.28) and Christ is *all things to all human beings* (cf. 1 Cor 28), the true lover of wisdom has as his goal the Divine One who is true wisdom, and the soul, cleaving to its incorruptible Bridegroom, has a love of true wisdom which is God.⁵³

Meanwhile, Gregory was still detained in the engagements of his life as a rhetorician, and perhaps in the care of his son. If there is any possibility of Gregory's authorship of letter 365, *to the Emperor* among Basil's letters, included here as **letter 37**, the natural setting of the letter is this period when he was still a secular professional man. The political circumstances were not such as to recommend appeals to the Arian emperor Valens from the leaders of Neo-nicene orthodoxy in Caesarea, and it may be that Basil, taking his brother's presence and profession as an opportunity, prompted him to write an

⁵³ GNO 8.1, 247–343, Callahan, 63–4, slightly adapted.

appeal on behalf of the citizens the city in the aftermath of a disastrous flood of the river Halys.

The positive contributions of a profession in rhetoric towards Gregory's spiritual vocation and his work for the Church should be owned and applauded. The first benefit is obvious, namely that Gregory was very highly practised in discourse and argument. Secondly, and very importantly, his life of teaching necessarily kept him conversant with the Greek philosophical writers. Gregory's skills were well honed for his future emergence both as a demonstrative and a speculative theologian. Thirdly, his deeply imbibed Hellenic culture prepared him to operate with authority in those echelons of secular society which prized such attainments.

EARLY YEARS AS BISHOP, 371–378

At last Basil won his brother for the episcopate. The occasion was the emperor Valens' partition of Cappadocia into two provinces in the year 371.⁵⁴ Bishop Anthimus of Tyana unilaterally arrogated metropolitan status over the churches of Cappadocia Secunda. Basil attempted to maintain the area of his own metropolitan sway, regarding it as material to the orthodox cause. He appointed new bishops to strategic towns along the border of the new division. One of these towns was Nyssa, in western Cappadocia, some three days journey from Caesarea on the way to Ancyra.⁵⁵ Gregory accepted his ordination and appointment to Nyssa in great reluctance and self-doubt—'under every necessity' as Basil says in **letter 225.6**. Yet once he accepted it, he did so conscientiously. He does not seem to have maintained any grudge against the constraint that had been put upon him, as was the case with Gregory Nazianzen.

Gregory's ordination as bishop took place in late 371, possibly at the annual synod of Caesarea in September. It was precisely at this period, after he had been ordained at Basil's hands, that Gregory

⁵⁴ Cf. Basil's letters 74–76, 97–98, Gregory Nazianzen *Oration* 43.58–59.

⁵⁵ The site of Nyssa today is about 1 km north of the town of Harmandali, which is some 28 km SSW of Kırsehir, c. 30 km NNW of Ortaköy through Ağaören. See F. Hild and M. Restle, *Tabula Imperii Byzantini Band II Kappadokien*, 246–248. For the history of the localisation of Nyssa, see P. Maraval, 'Nysse en Cappadoce', *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 55 (1975), 237–242.

visited his sister Macrina for the second-last time. He was not to see her again until her death-bed nearly eight years later. In the VSM Gregory reckons up his previous visit to his sister as 'a little short of eight years'.⁵⁶ If we accept the date of Macrina's death as July 19, 379,⁵⁷ backdating brings us to late 371/early 372.

That he must have presented himself as a newly minted priest and bishop to his sister on this second-last visit is suggested in the VSM where Lampadion mentions 'your priesthood which she always honoured'.⁵⁸ This was also the occasion, one might suggest, that Macrina thought of a spiritual *vademecum* for her brother in his new situation: to send south with him their younger sister Theosebia, a virgin of the community at Annisa. She would be his *syzygos*, a spiritual 'yolk-fellow' in his household or at least in close association with him, whose presence would help reassure him as he matured into his new vocation, and who on her own account might be expected to strengthen the right ideals of monastic life at Nyssa. She may well have founded or reformed the house of virgins there.⁵⁹ Certainly, according to **Nazianzen's letter 197** she exercised a leading role among the women of Gregory's church. Alternatively one might wonder if Theosebia had been sent to Gregory's side at an earlier stage, even before his episcopate. That would explain both his and her absence from Emmelia's death-bed.

The documentation for the early phase of Gregory's episcopacy is very sketchy. The first note of him as bishop may be in the list of subscribers to **Basil's letter 92 to the bishops of the West**. Basil's misgivings about his brother's political savvy were to be confirmed. In his **letter 100** we learn of 'the actions meditated against us by Gregory of Nyssa in his simplicity, who convenes synods regarding Ancyra and leaves nothing undone to plot against us.' The ecclesiastical problem seems to concern not Arians but the Old Nicenes who had gravitated around Marcellus of Ancyra.⁶⁰ Gregory evidently

⁵⁶ VSM 17.2 (GNO 8.1.386–387, Maraval 190–192).

⁵⁷ See the conclusions below in 'A problem of dating'.

⁵⁸ VSM 31.6, GNO 8.1, 402–403, Maraval 238.

⁵⁹ On the house of virgins at Nyssa see letter 6.10.

⁶⁰ That the issue was with Marcellians rather than Arians, see G. May, 'Gregor von Nyssa in der Kirchenpolitik seiner Zeit', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 15 (1966), 107–109.

initiated some dialogue with them, but in such a way that Basil considered that his own name was compromised.

In **letter 215**, as already mentioned, Basil entertains for a moment the prospect of sending Gregory with Dorotheus as an envoy to Pope Damasus on behalf of the eastern Neo-nicenes, but decides the better of it. On the other hand, though Gregory did not show promise as a church politician, he seems to have been a pastoral success with the ordinary people, if the widespread and enthusiastic welcome reported in **letter 6** is anything to go by.

The major event of this period for Gregory was his exile from Nyssa in the winter of 375/376. There is no need here to discuss in detail what happened—that can be followed in **Basil's letters 225, 231, 232, 237, 239** and notes. Suffice it to say that several meetings had taken place between the emperor Valens or his high-ranking deputies with Basil, but all their attempts to intimidate the prelate of Caesarea had failed signally. Such was his personal moral force that the Arian emperor did not visit him with any of the penalties of exile, imprisonment or work in the mines which he readily employed against other Neo-nicene bishops and leaders. Hence when Demosthenes became the vicar of the 'Pontic' diocese, i.e. a kind of deputy emperor over a bloc of provinces which included Bithynia, Galatia, Paphlagonia, Pontus, Cappadocia and Armenia, he set about harassing the Neo-nicenes, not by targeting Basil but his brother instead. From Gregory's statement in the VSM: 'the Emperor Valens drove me out on account of the faith',⁶¹ it is clear that whatever the pretexts, Gregory and Basil were sure that Valens' religious policy was the driving force behind Demosthenes' activities. On the basis of a single informant Gregory was summoned to answer a charge of financial mismanagement. Some discussion has been mooted as to whether Gregory really was at some fault, but it is doubtful. Compare his care over the costing of the building of the martyrion in **letter 20**. Adding to the confusion of the moment, Demosthenes' actions were abetted by Eustathius of Sebasteia. That the latter could lend himself to such vicious politicking despite his ancient friendship with Gregory's family: this, and his leadership of those called *Pneumatomachoi*—neo-homoiousians who refused all definitions of the

⁶¹ VSM 23.1, GNO 8.1.393, Maraval 208.

divine nature of the Holy Spirit—gave Gregory both personal and doctrinal reasons to subsequently exclude Eustathius from all accounts of his family's past.

Basil remarks in **letter 231** that Gregory was now *ὑπερόριος*, i.e. 'beyond the border'. If this means outside Demosthenes' jurisdiction, as seems likely in the context, then Gregory had passed not merely beyond the province of Cappadocia, but out of the Pontic civil diocese altogether. One can only conjecture where he might have gone. That he went south at any rate, is clear, which explains why he was never anywhere near the north to visit Annisa at this period. St Thecla's monastery in Seleucia of Isauria is a possibility, whither Gregory Nazianzen had withdrawn at the same period. One might also wonder about Sannabodae—see Gregory Nazianzen letter 238. The documentation is too scanty for us to be sure except for two things: Gregory was in some way kept out of general view and political reach, and Basil was able to maintain ready contact with him. This period of enforced seclusion, of lying low, was surely a providential preparation for the years of Gregory's strenuous activity to come. He had the opportunity to steep himself more deeply in the Scriptures and in prayer and it is worth noting Daniélou's suggestion⁶² that his *commentary on the inscriptions of the psalms*, and *on the sixth psalm*, and perhaps *on Ecclesiastes* where he mentions that the Arian faithlessness that presently prevails,⁶³ might be dated to this period.

A PROBLEM OF DATING

The notes prefacing Gregory's **letter 1** tell of a controversy among scholars concerning the authorship of that letter that fluctuated from one side to the other for some decades and was finally resolved in the early 1980s. Another major controversy affecting Gregory's chronology began in the late 1980s and only now seems to be reaching some kind of settlement. It concerns the dating of the return of the exiled Neo-nicene bishops, Basil's death and of the council of Antioch nine months later.

⁶² 'Chronologie', 162.

⁶³ See May, 'Die Chronologie', 56–57.

Building on the work of recent scholars,⁶⁴ Pierre Maraval argued a case⁶⁵ for redating these events, after reassessment of the evidences that Valens himself recalled the exiles. He recapitulated his arguments in the *Lettres*, 18–23, with most of the bibliography on p. 19, n. 1.

The new chronology proposed was as follows: Basil died in August 377, Valens repealed the sentences of exile in September–October 377, he then departed Antioch (autumn 377), Gregory returned to Nyssa at the end of 377, the council of Antioch took place after Easter 378, probably in May, Gregory left Antioch to return to Cappadocia in June 378 and reached Pontus in July, Macrina's death took place on 19 July⁶⁶ 378, Gregory returned to Nyssa in August 378 and spent more than a year in Nyssa dealing with the incursions of the heretics before the summons to Iborra. Dating for the events in Sebasteia is not very forthcoming, presumably early in 380.⁶⁷ Other consequences follow for Basil's and Gregory's chronology. On the datum of eight full years for Basil's episcopate, Basil's election would have to be backdated to 369. The great famine was backdated likewise to 368, and Emmelia's death likewise.

This hypothesis from such a specialist in the field caused some ripples among scholars. The consternation and doubt can be seen in the appendix on the topic in Rousseau's 1994 book *Basil of Caesarea*.⁶⁸ He concluded 'Obscurities and suppositions abound; and one has to retain the feeling that an earlier date for Basil's death is by no means finally established'.

Not as yet informed of the subsequent debate, I found myself unable to concur with such an early re-dating. Jerome's credentials as a contemporary historian in the area being very considerable, I

⁶⁴ Alan Booth, 'The Chronology of Jerome's early years', *Phoenix* 35 (1981), 237–259, who redated Basil's death to 14 June 377 (pp. 237–239); Rochelle Snee, 'Valens's Recall of the Nicene Exiles and Anti-Arian Propaganda', *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies* 26 (1986), 395–456, who argued that Valens left Antioch in Autumn of 377, recalling the exiles before he did so.

⁶⁵ 'La date de la mort de Basile de Césarée', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 34 (1988), 25–38.

⁶⁶ This is Macrina's feast-day in all the menologies and synaxaries. The date is confirmed, Maraval considers, by the fact that in VSM 21 (GNO 8.1, 391, Maraval 202) Gregory rests in the shade of the trailing vines, which is of course incompatible with a date in December, as in Diekamp's reckoning.

⁶⁷ On these latter events see *Lettres*, 28–31.

⁶⁸ Phillip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1994), 'Appendix III The Date of Basil's Death and of the *Hexaemeron*', 360–363.

gave and give full weight to his unique testimony for Basil that he died *imperante Gratiano*, i.e. in the reign of Gratian.⁶⁹ Since he is consistent in recording the emperors of either the western or eastern Roman empire for each entry according to whether the person died in the western or eastern empire, this detail means only one thing: Basil died in the interval when Gratian was sole ruler of the empire, i.e. between the death of Valens on 9 August 378 and the appointment of Theodosius as Augustus of the East on January 19, 379.

Moreover, inspection of the text in the *Chronicle of Edessa*, which was the cornerstone for an early dating of the return of the exiles, showed that it was by no means unambiguous.⁷⁰ A translation of the relevant entries is as follows: '32. In the year 689, in the month Adar [= March 378], Mar Barses, bishop of Edessa, departed from the world. 33. And on the twenty-seventh day in the month Kanun Qdim [= 27 December] of the same year, the orthodox came in and recovered the church of Edessa. 34. And in those days Mar Eulogius became bishop in the year that Theodosius the Great became king . . . '.

As a sample of chronology it is odd that the chronicler would report Barses' death in March 378, backtrack to December 377 for the return of the exiles, and then leap forward to 379 after Theodosius became Emperor. Thus the phrase 'of the same year' after *Kanun Qdim* is anomalous. If it means the same *Seleucid* year, the qualifying addition would seem superfluous, but if the Chronicler in fact means the *Roman* year, in keeping with his recording the entry *after* Adar 689, then the date is 27 December 378. An early scholar, Haillier argued⁷¹ that 'of the same year' was interpolated and that the orthodox bishops returned after Gratian's edict in the late summer of 378.

Further doubts arise from the rather strained efforts necessary to explain away a wide range of data supporting a later chronology. For example, not one but two pieces of evidence concerning Eulogius,

⁶⁹ *De Viris Illustribus* 116.

⁷⁰ *Chronicon Edessenum* CSCO 1, ed. I. Guidi (Louvain, 1903) pp. 5–6. See Maraval, *La date*, 29, n.24. The *Chronicle of Edessa* is a late document, written shortly after 540. It uses the Seleucid era, reckoned from October 1, 312 BC. The Christian era is derived by subtracting 311 from a Seleucid year except for the months October–December, in which case 312 is subtracted.

⁷¹ L. Hallier, *Untersuchungen über die Edessenische Chronik*, Texte und Untersuchungen 9.1 (Leipzig, 1892), p. 102.

bishop of Edessa must be reinterpreted: first that he did not become bishop till the reign of Theodosius, as the *Chronicle of Edessa* quoted above states, and second that he was a participant in the council of Neo-nicene bishops at Antioch.⁷²

In an admirable exercise of scholarly collaboration, Maraval invited Pouchet, an expert in Basil's letters, to look into the question. In 1992 Pouchet published a major essay⁷³ in which he re-examined the internal evidence of Basil's letters, and argued in detail that his letter 48 to Eusebius of Samosata contains enough data of itself to establish that Basil was elected bishop of Caesarea in September 370, at about the same time as Demophilus was elected the (Homoian) bishop of Constantinople.⁷⁴ Eight full years of episcopacy and no more⁷⁵ lead thence to a date in late September 378 for Basil's death.

Pouchet does not engage with the issue of the early recall of the exiles, but emphasises the reasons for delay between the occasion of Valens' recall of the exiles, and their effective return to their intruded sees. He speaks in terms of first an 'amnesty' by Valens and then the 'effective recall' by Gratian. He dates Basil's letter 268 to Eusebius of Samosata in Thrace, to late April or the beginning of May 378, noting that though Basil does not mention explicitly the recall of the exiles, one can perceive clearly, in the first half of the letter, an unusual confidence in Eusebius' liberation and return.

Pouchet agrees with Maraval that Gregory's *Encomium*⁷⁶ is concerned with the establishment of Basil's memorial day on 1 January

⁷² Fragments of the letter from Damasus of Rome, *Ea, gratia, Illud sane, Non nobis*, preserve the names of seven participants: Meletius of Antioch, Eusebius of Samosata, Pelagius of Laodicea, Zenon of Tyre, Eulogius of Edessa, Bematius of Malle, Diodorus of Tarsus. Most of these had been Basil's correspondents. See Maraval, *La date*, 38 n. 16.

⁷³ Pouchet, J.-R., 'La date de l'élection épiscopale de saint Basile et celle de sa mort', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 87 (1992), 5–33.

⁷⁴ In this Pouchet was not advancing something new. He notes on p. 14 many authors of the last three centuries who noted the synchronicity of Basil's and Demophilus' elections. He cites Tillemont to say: Tillemont: 'We do not see any other means of understanding letter 254 (i.e. 48 Benedictine) of Saint Basil . . . without placing his election in 370.'

⁷⁵ The evidence for this is Gregory Nazianzen's *Epigram* 10b, and Gregory of Nyssa, VSM 16.2 (GNO 8.1, 385, Maraval' edition, 88), where Gregory says 'Eight years having passed after this [his election], at the ninth year' [τῷ ἐνάτῳ ἐνιαυτῷ] he died. Since this latter phrase lacks a qualifying phrase typically used elsewhere by Gregory, such as 'or a little more', it means the ninth year has advanced but little.

⁷⁶ GNO 10.1, *In Basilium Fratrem* (Eulogy for his brother Basil), GNO 10.1, 109–34.

and that it does not necessarily imply that it was the actual day of his death. Among all the reasons Gregory gives for holding this celebration on this day, he does not mention that it was the anniversary of Basil's death, surely a prime consideration if such were the case. Martyrs were commemorated on the day of their *confession*, and Basil did not die a martyr. Indeed he must have been one of the first non-martyrs to receive a canonical feast-day.

But why a delay of more than three months between the death of Basil and his liturgical commemoration? Pouchet answers this by rehearsing the fact that there was as yet no inviolable norm with regard to choosing this day or that, specially for the novel situation of a non-martyr saint. He proposes two reasons for the time-lag: Basil died not long after the local celebration of the martyr Euppsychius (5/7 September) and the autumn synod at Caesarea that followed. He conjectures that Helladius, Basil's successor, would not have wished to fuse the popular feast of a local martyr and the synod of the church at Caesarea with the commemoration of his predecessor in a period already overcharged for himself and his clergy. Better to reserve it for a holiday period not far off. Secondly, a reason already proposed, the establishment of a feast day on January 1, along with the preceding feasts of Christmas, Apostles and Martyrs, would help to displace the licentiousness of pagan celebrations of the kalends of January.

Pouchet takes into full account the liturgical evidence for Macrina's death on 19 July, and Gregory's description in the VSM⁷⁷ of his sitting outside in the shade of the trellis vines on the eve of her death, which renders a date in November or December quite impossible. Again with Maraval, Gregory's statement⁷⁸ that the bishops broke up their meeting *before the year had passed by* must refer not to the Roman year but the local Seleucid year of Antioch which began on October 1. Pouchet's proposed chronology is as follows:

Basil's election as bishop	mid September 370
Basil's death	20 September 378
Beginning of the council of Antioch	21 May 379
End of the council	21 June 379

⁷⁷ VSM 21.2, GNO 8.1, 389, Maraval, 200.

⁷⁸ VSM 17.1, GNO 8.1, 386, Maraval, 190.

Gregory leaves Antioch for Cappadocia	22 June 379
Gregory arrives in Cappadocia	7 July 379
Gregory leaves for Annisa in Pontus.....	8 July 379
He arrives in Annisa.....	18 July 379
Macrina's death	19 July 379

In 1997, T. D. Barnes published a talk given in Oxford in 1995, in which he also reassessed the date of the return of the exiles and of Basil's death.⁷⁹ A useful contribution to the debate was his reconsideration of the date of Valens' departure from Antioch. The detailed narrative of Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* 31 makes it clear that Valens spent the winter of 377/8 in Antioch. The other sources, primarily Jerome,⁸⁰ with Rufinus⁸¹ and Socrates dependent on him, show that he must have departed Antioch in the Spring of 378, i.e. late in April or in May 378, and this must prevail against Snee's attempt to date it to Autumn 377. Valens went 'with haste' to Constantinople. Basil's letter 268 to Eusebius of Samosata was written after this departure. Basil remarks that he hears that Valens and his court is passing by. Barnes thinks this was through Caesarea itself.

Barnes maintains the long received dating of Basil's death: 1 January 379.⁸² But any fresh argument supporting this traditional date is unfortunately lacking. He fails to respond to Pouchet's and Maraval's arguments in significant ways. For example, he does not

⁷⁹ T. D. Barnes, 'The Collapse of the Homoeans in the East', *Studia Patristica* 29 (1997), 3–16.

⁸⁰ Jerome, *Chronicle* A.D. 378. *Die Chronik des Hieronymus, Hieronymi chronicon*, in *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der Ersten Jahrhunderte, Eusebius' Werke* siebenter band, hrsg von Rudolf Helm, (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1984), 249.

⁸¹ *Church History* 11.13: *Tum vero Valentis bella, quae ecclesiis inferebat, in hostem coepta converti, seraque paenitentia episcopos et presbyteros relaxari exiliis ac de metallis resolvi monachos iubet* ('But then Valens began to direct his warfare away from the Churches to the enemy, and in a late repentance [same phrase as in Jerome] ordered the bishops and priests to be set free from exile and the monks released from the mines'), *Eusebius Werke* 2.2, *Die Kirchengeschichte*, ed. E. Schwartz & Th. Mommsen (Vienna: Akademie Verlag, 1908), 1019–1020. Rufinus immediately goes on to describe Valens' being besieged in the hut on the battlefield, so the 'late repentance' more naturally precedes that event than a supposed departure from Antioch almost a year earlier. It is perhaps not generally realized that Rufinus had his own credentials as a contemporary historian. He was very likely present in Antioch and Edessa in the year 378. See my 'Edessa to Casino: the passage of Basil's *Asketikon* to the West', *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002), 247–259.

⁸² Prudent Maran assembled all of Tillemont's reasons for a date of 1 Jan 379 in chapter 13 of his *Vita Basilii* PG 29 lvii–lix.

engage with Pouchet's study of letter 48, and enters into no discussion of Gregory's *Encomium* as evidence for the date of Basil's death and not just his memorial day.⁸³ The issues concerning Gregory of Nyssa's journeys and Macrina's death are ignored.

The main points of Barnes' chronology are as follows:

Basil's death	1 Jan 379
Council of Antioch.....	September 379
Journey to Annisa and Macrina's death	November 379

Maraval himself published a summary article in 2004 reviewing the whole question.⁸⁴ He had long retracted his earlier position, and did so again here, putting on record his essential agreement with Pouchet's argumentation. He gives a more realistic interpretation of the 'passing by' of Valens and his army or court in Basil's letter 268. He asks whether it was necessarily through Caesarea, given that it was in haste, but rather to the south-west through Sasima, Nazianzus and Coloneia.

Pouchet's solution of the evidence is soundly and untendentiously argued. More than that, it is elegant, most of the pieces falling into place naturally and without strain. One might only amend it by gratefully accepting Barnes' restatement of the case for dating Valens' departure from Antioch to Spring 378. It would have been good to find cogent fresh argument supporting the long received dating of Basil's death, but, with all the best will possible in that direction, it must be conceded that Pouchet's chronology most satisfactorily and comprehensively answers all the major issues concerning the date of Basil's election as bishop, his final correspondence, the Neo-nicene council of Antioch, Gregory of Nyssa's journeys and the date of Macrina's death.

If we do accept Pouchet's arguments for re-dating Basil's death, we can at least be thankful that it is far less drastic than Maraval's

⁸³ Barnes remarks on Maraval's argument that Gregory's homily was the source of the subsequent tradition: 'That could be theoretically correct, but it sounds suspiciously like special pleading. If Basil was alive in the summer of 378, while the liturgical and hagiographical evidence points to 1 January as the day of his death, then the obvious inference is the traditional one, viz., that Basil died on 1 January 379' (Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 12.). That is the extent of the response.

⁸⁴ 'Retour sur quelques dates concernant Basile de Césarée et Grégoire de Nysse', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 99 (2004), 153–157.

proposal in 1988. It is brought forward little more than three months from the traditional dating. Most importantly, a date of late September 378 remains within the narrow window of Gratian's reign as sole ruler of the empire both west and east.

For the purposes of this chronology then, we will accept that Valens changed his attitude to the Neo-nicene exiles at about the time he left Antioch in the Spring of 378, that the return of the exiles was happening in a piecemeal fashion until given impetus by Gratian's edict in August, that Gregory returned to Nyssa sometime during the summer—certainly by the end of it, only to wait on his brother's dying weeks and days, that Basil died in late September, that the re-grouping of the Neo-nicene bishops in Antioch took place in May–June 379, and that Macrina died on 19 July 379.

GREGORY'S RETURN FROM EXILE AND RISE IN CHURCH AFFAIRS, 378–381

'Arianism vanished in the crash of Hadrianople', it has been said.⁸⁵ For a few months, the western emperor, Gratian, friend and disciple of Ambrose of Milan and a staunch Nicene, became sole emperor of west and east. One of his first acts in that capacity was to formally revoke Valens' penalties against the Nicene leaders, and to proclaim toleration for all except for a few extremist minorities.⁸⁶ This was a confirmation of some kind of concession granted by Valens some months before his death, as even Tillemont and Maran recognized.⁸⁷ Tillemont thought Valens might have changed his mind on the matter of the exiles as early as May 378.⁸⁸

So, sometime in the summer or early autumn of 378 Gregory was free at last to return to Nyssa. Though he was often absent from Nyssa over the years, **letter 6** does seem to mark a very special welcome home. It would seem to fit this occasion particularly well, though it could well mark his return in 380 from his captivity in Sebasteia, on which more below.

⁸⁵ W. Moore, NPNF ser. 2 vol. 5, 6.

⁸⁶ Socrates *HE* 5.2, Sozomen *HE* 7.1, Theodoret *HE* 5.2; cf. *Codex Theod.* 16.5.5.

⁸⁷ Cf. Maran, *Vita S. Basilii* PG 29 lviiA. Both Tillemont and Maran take account of Jerome's and Rufinus' testimonies and are aware of an early return of the Edessan exiles.

⁸⁸ *Memoires* 9.555.

Nazianzen's letter 76 indicates that Gregory was in Caesarea for his brother's death and funeral. From then on Gregory's own writings enter prominently—indeed one say erupt—into the historical record. Three works belong to the early months of 379, his *Second homily On the Forty Martyrs*, the homily *Against Usurers*, and the treatises *On the Making of Man*, followed soon after by *Apologetic Defence on the Hexaemeron*. In these works Gregory presents himself as the continuer of Basil's work and explains his purpose in taking up and completing themes initiated by Basil. This stance as Basil's heir in doctrinal exposition is expressed so promptly, consciously and with unaffected authority that is fair to assume that on his death-bed Basil himself had charged his brother, whom he himself had ordained bishop, to continue his defence and promotion of sound faith (see **letter 29.4**) and not to forget his special care, the monks and virgins (see **letter 3.26**). This was a new mantle of responsibility, conferred in solemn circumstances, just as Elijah towards Elisha, and Gregory took up the charge conscientiously.

Gregory's *Second Homily on the Forty [Martyrs]*, which chronologically was his first on these martyrs, shows him publicly assuming this role as his brother's successor. He preached it on 9 March 379 in the same *martyrion* in Caesarea in which Basil had also once delivered his homily on the Forty Martyrs.⁸⁹ Devotion to these saints was a spiritual palladium of the entire family. At Easter 379 he delivered at Nyssa his first sermon *On the Pasch and the Resurrection*. So in late 378 and early 379 Gregory was busy writing, speaking and travelling until his trip to Antioch. From the fact that *On the Making of Man* was sent (as an Easter gift) to Peter, not yet bishop in Sebasteia, and soon after *Apologetic Defence on the Hexaemeron* was also dedicated to him, it is clear that there was ongoing correspondence with Annisa. Thus through Peter at least Macrina was apprised of her brother Gregory's activities since his return from exile, and he himself would have been aware if there were any serious concerns for her health. Besides, there may have been direct correspondence between Gregory and Macrina, though nothing has survived to confirm that now.

May⁹⁰ insightfully notes the intense spiritual exchange between the two brothers that appears from this time on. It was surely a two

⁸⁹ See Daniélou, 'Chronologie', 347.

⁹⁰ 'Die Chronologie', p. 57.

way affair. While Gregory for his part became his little brother's preceptor in forensic theological discourse, Peter to Gregory was Macrina's most faithful disciple from infancy, a pure man wholly consecrated to God who had never compromised himself, one who had become in his own right a generous and wise father of monks and virgins. Gregory repeatedly refers to him in the VSM as 'the great Peter'.⁹¹ For both Gregory and Peter, Basil was 'our common father and teacher' (*On the Making of Man*, introduction). Macrina for her part was 'mother in place of our mother' (**letter 19.6**) and 'teacher' (throughout *On the Soul and Resurrection*). Basil is never portrayed in relation to Macrina as father—and indeed at one critical juncture, he is clearly portrayed as her spiritual son. Ultimately Macrina the first-born, and Basil the first-born son, became spiritual mother and father to all their younger siblings.

And now we come to the tumultuous events of mid 379–mid 380. **Letter 19** and the VSM are our chief documents of this history. While the general sequence of events is clear, their precise timing is not always so. The pioneer interpreter of these events was Diekamp,⁹² who of course was dependent on the dating of Basil's death established by Tillemont. But Pouchet's re-dating of events allows us to reconfigure the chronology without too much difficulty.

Some eight months and more after Basil's death,⁹³ in May–June 379, Gregory took part in a conference at Antioch of the Neo-nicene

⁹¹ It is intriguing that to Socrates, writing in c. 440, Peter was Basil's inheritor as a monk, Gregory his inheritor as a theologian: 'Basil had two brothers, Peter and Gregory, the former of whom adopted his monastic way of life, while the latter emulated his eloquence in teaching', *H.E.* 4.26.

⁹² Diekamp's chronology ('Die Wahl', 392–394) may be summarized as follows: Gregory was absent from Nyssa from August 379. The Synod of bishops in Antioch began in September or October and took about three months; Gregory only left Antioch in December. Diekamp mentions, with a footnote to Loofs [*Eustathius von Sebaste und die Chronologie der Basiliius-briefe*, Halle, 1898, p. 12, n. 8], that the beginning of the year in the provincial Cappadocian reckoning was 12 December. Gregory did not go to Nyssa but was in Cappadocia when he received the disturbing news about his sister, whereupon he took a ten days journey to reach his sister in Pontus where she led a monastic community. 'The death of Macrina therefore took place in December 379 or January 380.' Some days later Gregory reached Nyssa again where he took 'some weeks' to re-establish order after the depredations of the 'Galatians'. He travelled to Ibora in about March 380, where he stayed about a month. He was then called to Sebasteia only in April 379, where he spent 'at least two or three months' in Sebasteia. He would scarcely have returned to Nyssa 'before the middle of 380'.

⁹³ VSM 17.1, GNO 8.1, 386, Maraval, 190.

bishops formerly exiled under Valens. Their concern was to rally their cause and discuss the re-establishment of sound faith in the civil dioceses of Pontus and the *Orient*. Welcomed by Basil's circle of episcopal colleagues, Gregory appears to have been confirmed or encouraged as his brother's heir in the defence of doctrine, and may have been designated a special referee for church order, a role much more formally sanctioned and extended two years later in Constantinople. Indeed they seem to have mandated him to reconcile certain Marcellians (**letter 5.2**). His official mission to the churches of Arabia and Jerusalem came two years later, after the council of 381.

During this time in Antioch Gregory made the personal acquaintance of the famous pagan rhetorician, Libanius, of which **letters 13 and 14** are testimony. On the return journey from Antioch he had halted in 'Cappadocia', when he was suddenly spurred to visit his sister Macrina as soon as he could. Gregory's own accounts report the decision in different ways. According to the VSM he had already been intending to visit her because it had been so long since they had last met, in **letter 19** he was galvanized by receiving disturbing news of her condition, in *On the Soul* he visited her to seek consolation over Basil's death. He says he travelled as quickly as possible, taking ten days journey to cover the distance. That it took ten days from *Caesarea* to Annisa 'with haste' is doubtful. But if Gregory was further south when he received the news, perhaps even at Tyana, then part of that ten days was spent reaching Caesarea and continuing his journey on from there. Allowing a month or so for the council in Antioch from late May, Gregory left Antioch late in June and reached Cappadocia no later than 8 July. He did not turn aside to Nyssa,⁹⁴ but immediately continued on up to Pontus, reaching Annisa on 18 July 378. To his measureless sorrow he found his sister Macrina on her death-bed. She died in the evening of the next day. Two days after his arrival Gregory, together with Araxius, the local bishop, led her funeral procession to the *martyrion* outside the village, and buried her there in their parents' grave by the relics of the Forty Martyrs.

⁹⁴ Four days before Gregory's arrival Peter had left Annisa looking for his brother. He almost certainly made directly for Nyssa in western Cappadocia, probably through Amasea, but did not find him. Thus by a strange reversal the loyal Peter was absent from his sister's death and funeral while the so long absent Gregory was present.

Immediately he took the road south again, possibly hoping to meet Peter along the way. Taking a route through Sebastopolis⁹⁵ he arrived back in Nyssa early in August, depending how long he may have stopped over in Caesarea. Alas, the 'Galatians' had sown trouble in his church from the time of his departure in late April, and he had to go to some trouble to repair the harm. This time the problem seems not to have been Marcellians but Arianizers who had once had a field-day at Nyssa in Valens' time and who now exploited Gregory's long absence to undermine the Nio-nicene ascendancy.⁹⁶ Gregory had barely finished stabilizing his church when he was approached by an embassy to come to Ibora, a town in Pontus a half-day's journey from Annisa, which had long enjoyed links with Gregory's family. Their bishop had lately died, and the Neo-nicenes of the town felt that Gregory's presence would secure the election of an orthodox bishop. So sometime perhaps in mid to late January Gregory made his way to Pontus again, where he secured the election of a devoted Neo-nicene, Pansophius,⁹⁷ as the new bishop of Ibora.

This mission was barely accomplished when in late February 380 an embassy from Sebasteia arrived in Ibora seeking the same offices from him for their own city. Eustathius, who is not named, had died, it is not quite clear when. The stakes in this episcopal election, however, were far higher than in Ibora, since Sebasteia was a metropolis, and its two previous long-lived bishops, Eulalius and Eustathius had not been Nicenes. Gregory was acting as a scrutineer at the election when he was startled to find himself the one elected. Up roar followed. Then **letter 19**, our sole source of information on this episode, melts down in lamentation and becomes scanty on information. It is clear at any rate that Gregory was taken into some kind of custody, whether coercive or protective is uncertain. **Letters 22 and 23** are piteous appeals for deliverance from the predicament in which he now found himself. **Letters 10 and 17** also seem to find their proper setting in this sorry episode. The profession of faith in **letter 5** may also be explained by this tense situation. It would be an attractive thought that Gregory solved the

⁹⁵ VSM 39.2, *GNO* 8.1, 410, Maraval, 256.

⁹⁶ See May, 'Die Chronologie', p. 55; P. Maraval, 'Lettres', 27.

⁹⁷ See P. Maraval, 'Un correspondant de Grégoire de Nazianze identifié: Pansophios d'Ibora', *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988), 24–26.

dilemma by proposing his own brother Peter as bishop for Sebasteia at that stage, but it is doubtful that such a dating is appropriate, since no further information is forthcoming. Maraval suggests very plausibly that a Pneumatomachian may have been put in place until the triumph of orthodoxy in 381. It seems to have been another case of Gregory's failure in church politics. Gregory at any rate, in unrecorded circumstances, was restored to Nyssa by about mid 380.

Thus from the time he set out for Antioch in April 379 until his final restoration to Nyssa in mid 380, Gregory experienced a relentless succession of events. That is exactly the impression that **letter 19** gives: an unremitting onslaught of emergencies, one overtaking the other. If the mission to Ibora took place in the winter of 379/380, the episode in Sebasteia fits the late winter/early spring of 380, which was exactly the period of the feast-day of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia (March 9) and a likely occasion for the electoral synod. One might wonder about so much travelling and activity in regions of severe winters, yet of the letters written at that period **letter 18.9** testifies to the 'numbing cold', and **letter 10**, written some weeks later, rejoices at the signs of early spring. **Letter 1.5b** confirms that a very few years later Gregory did indeed celebrate the Feast of the Forty Martyrs in Sebasteia at that frigid time of year, though when he had reached Cappadocia lower in the Halys valley he seems to have encountered warmer weather.

After his release from captivity in Sebasteia, Gregory spent a period of intense literary activity lasting until the Spring of 381. During this time, the Neo-nicenes were consolidating their position, and he bent all his energies to serve the great cause. Most of his theological writings of this time are concerned with promoting an orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Gregory was now fully exercising the role of apologist for Neo-nicene orthodoxy.

During this time he completed his very lengthy *Contra Eunomium* I.⁹⁸ This was an answer to the first book of Eunomius' *Apologia pro Apologia*, in which the Anomoian theologian had finally answered Basil's *Contra Eunomium* after 14 years. Gregory, in his **letter 29** to Peter—who at that stage was probably still the monastic superior at Annisa—writes that on his return from Armenia he wrote the first two books

⁹⁸ GNO 1.22–225; tr. NPNF ser. 2 vol. 5, 35–100. The 'two books' shortly mentioned refer to two sections of what we now know as *CE* I, not to *CE* 1 and 2.

of his *Contra Eunomium*. He gives the impression that he had already been making notes for his reply while in Armenia, which means he must have been grudgingly lent Eunomius' *Apologia* while in Sebasteia. Gregory felt the need of Peter's approval and encouragement before venturing to publish it, because he had resorted to a lot of heated *ad hominem* argument in response to Eunomius' attempted character assassination of Basil. Peter wrote back **letter 30** in reply, giving his brother the go-ahead in no uncertain terms.

It is possible that Gregory travelled up to Neocaesarea to deliver a panegyric to Gregory Thaumaturgus on his feast-day, November 17, 380, which was later edited and expanded as the *Life*.⁹⁹ It now appears that the Trinitarian creed attributed to Thaumaturgus is really the work of Gregory of Nyssa himself. Its setting is the Neonicene agenda of the time and the attempt to heal the doctrinal rift that had grown up through the 370s between Artarbius bishop of Neocaesarea and Basil of Caesarea.¹⁰⁰

There is one date at this period on which Gregory can be located precisely from two sources. On 1 January 381, Basil's memorial day, he preached his *Funeral Oration on Basil* in Caesarea. In **letter 14** to Libanius, Gregory says he received a letter from the rhetorician Libanius on the 1st of January, 'in the metropolis of Cappadocia'. So on the very day he delivered his *Funeral Oration on Basil* he received the letter from the famous rhetorician.

It was also about this time that he also travelled up to Euchaita, just west of Amaseia, and preached at the *martyrion* of St Theodore

⁹⁹ It is tempting to fit the delivery of this panegyric during Gregory's visit to nearby Iborra in 379, when he was attending to the affairs of the church 'in Pontus'. Mitchell, 'On the Life and Lives', 112–5, 128 dates it to 17 November 379, but his scenario, based on Diekamp 'Die Wahl' above, has Gregory journeying to Neocaesarea after Macrina's death to carry out a mandate of church reform, that there he somehow deals with the problems of the 'Galatians' and the embassy from Sebasteia reaches him. But what of Gregory's report that he stopped at Sebastopolis on his return journey after Macrina's death?

¹⁰⁰ Luise Abramowski, in 'Das Bekenntnis des Gregor Thaumaturgus bei Gregor von Nyssa und das Problem seiner Echtheit', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 87 (1976), 145–166, provides strong arguments that the creed could not have derived from Gregory Thaumaturgus. Basil, for example, when defending himself against the concerns of the Neocesareans, and of Bishop Artarbius in particular, in *On the Holy Spirit*, and in Letters 204 and 210, shows no awareness of this creed which would have been such a help to his cause. In *Oration* 28.8 (380) Gregory Nazianzen quotes from a paragraph ostensibly concluding the creed and attributes it to an unnamed theologian who had written it 'a short time before'. This particular paragraph may have been some kind of a gloss, however, since it is not supported by all manuscripts.

there. Of the various dates proposed for Gregory's *homily on Theodore*, that of Bernardi: February 381, best fits the chronology presented here.¹⁰¹

To this period also can be assigned the small treatise-letters on the Trinity, **letter 33** to *Eustathius the physician on the Holy Trinity*, **letter 35** *To Peter his brother on the divine ousia and hypostasis*, *To the Greeks on common notions*, and *To Ablabius that there are not three gods*. In these letter-treatises, Gregory's ongoing controversy with the Pneumatomachians who accused him of advocating three gods and the Eunomians who accused him of being a Sabellian, can be discerned. The truncated **letter 24** to Heracleianus on Trinitarian doctrine is surely a specimen of many other such doctrinal letters from this period or a little later that have not survived.

THE ZENITH OF GREGORY'S PUBLIC CAREER, 381–386

In February 380, Gratian and Theodosius published the epoch-making edict that all their Christian subjects were to profess the faith of the Bishops of Rome and Alexandria.¹⁰² During that year they secured a tactical peace with the Goths. But before Theodosius could make his way to the eastern capital, he fell gravely ill at Thessalonika and asked Baptism from its bishop, Ascholius—once he had assured himself of the bishop's Nicene faith. But unexpectedly Theodosius revived. Thus it was as a baptized Christian, unusual for men of affairs in the secular world then, that Theodosius entered Constantinople for the first time on 24 November 380 as the Roman emperor of the east.¹⁰³ Theodosius paid immediate attention to the ecclesiastical situation. Very shortly he was accompanying St Gregory Nazianzen, leader of the Neo-nicene faithful, into the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and witnessing, if not his enthronement, at least his installation as administrator of the church in Constantinople.

Theodosius ordered a council to settle the affairs of the churches in the eastern empire in favour of the Nicene faith and to formalize Gregory Nazianzen's election as bishop. The council convened

¹⁰¹ J. Bernardi, *La prédication des Pères Cappadociens* (Paris: 1968), 303.

¹⁰² *Cod. Theod.* 'de Fide Catholica', 16.1.2; Sozomen *H.E.* 7.4.

¹⁰³ Socrates *H.E.* 5.6, Orosius, *Hist.* 8.34, CSEL, 381; Chron. Pasch. PG 92, 762.

in May 381. Daniélou¹⁰⁴ argues that Gregory preached the opening address, and it survives in the work misleadingly called *On his own ordination*.¹⁰⁵ Amid the many tumults of that council—so well rehearsed by Gregory Nazianzen—the venerable Meletius of Antioch, first president of the council, died suddenly towards the end of May. Gregory of Nyssa was chosen as the eulogist, and preached his *Funeral Oration on Meletius, Bishop of Antioch*. Jerome preserves an interesting sidelight on Gregory's activities at the council, for he too was present at the council, and together with Gregory Nazianzen listened to Gregory reading from his *Contra Eunomium* I.¹⁰⁶

The council fathers drew up a list of bishops whom they proposed as standard-bearers of Neo-nicene orthodoxy. The list was ratified by an edict of Theodosius on 30 July, 381,¹⁰⁷ according to which certain bishops were nominated for various regions, communion with whom would be reckoned as proof of orthodoxy. The three chosen for the civil diocese of Pontica were Helladius of Cæsarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Otreius of Melitene. The fact that Helladius, a metropolitan, and one of his bishops were together appointed to the same ecclesiastical pre-eminence, perhaps bore the seeds of future trouble between the two men. Gregory's brilliant, wonderful **Letter 1** is eloquent testimony to the mounting disaster of their relationship. **Letter 17**, written to the presbyters of Nicomedia probably in the late 380s/390, passionately exhorts them on the qualities to be looked for in choosing a bishop. Awareness of Helladius' simony, and many other sad experiences of fractious church affairs, had stirred Gregory to a deep religious passion for the remedying of the churches.

According to Theodoret, *HE* 5.8.4, Gregory's brother Peter was also at the council of Constantinople. One can well imagine a congenial scene: Gregory travels up to Annisa, where he collects Peter

¹⁰⁴ 'Chronologie', p. 357.

¹⁰⁵ There are 'for example, the references to discussions on the Holy Spirit, the mention of the expected arrival of delegates from Egypt'. And in the funeral oration for Meletius Gregory 'clearly refers to his discourse *on his Ordination*. 'This is a decisive proof of its date', *From Glory to Glory*, 1961/1995 repr. p. 72, n. 29. May concurs with this dating, 'Die Chronologie' p. 59. Tillemont had assigned the homily to Gregory's last appearance in Constantinople in 394. He is followed by R. Staats, 'Die Asketen aus Mesopotamien in der Rede des Gregor von Nyssa *In Suam Ordinationem*', *Vigiliae Christianae* 21 (1967), 165–179.

¹⁰⁶ *de Viris Illustribus* 128, PL 23.713.

¹⁰⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 16.1.3, Sozomen *H.E.* 7.9.6.

and travels with him along the *Via Pontica* to the capital, just as Basil and himself had once travelled the same route in Eustathius' entourage to the council of 360. Since Neo-nicene orthodoxy was now to be established throughout the churches of the eastern empire with imperial backing, the aftermath of this council seems the most suitable moment to date Peter's election as bishop of Sebasteia, replacing a heterodox successor to Gregory himself.¹⁰⁸

The council ended in July 381. Gregory's special mission to visit the churches in Arabia and Jerusalem, reported in **letters 2 and 3**, is far better dated after this council of 381 than after the council of Antioch in 379, as Tillemont and many following him had proposed. There was simply no time for such a lengthy mission further south in that hurried year of 379.¹⁰⁹ It appears that the mission to Arabia concerned strife over the see of Bozra. Daniélou mentions also that the 'antidicomarianite' heresy, which denied Mary's perpetual virginity, was at its height. Gregory's interest in the figure of Mary is discernible in the **letter 3** written soon after his return home.¹¹⁰

The scarifying experiences in Jerusalem that Gregory reports in that letter brought home to him how necessary it was to give further attention to Christological issues. Through the winter of 381/382 he completed his *Against Apollinaris*, in which he mentions his recent long journey, evidently the mission to Arabia. At Easter 382 he preached his 2nd sermon *on the Pasch or the Resurrection* in Nyssa, which takes up again the subject matter of his *Against Apollinaris* and **letter 3**. This sermon, says Daniélou,¹¹¹ also shows his shift to Scripture which characterizes his evolution at this period. Thus Gregory's theological preoccupations in 382 turned increasingly to Christology, as in the previous year they had been with the Trinity and with the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁸ On this dating of Peter's succession to Sebasteia see Maraval, *Lettres*, 288 n. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Maraval, *Lettres* 35–38, argues at length for this later dating. He notes especially the figure of Cyril of Jerusalem, who at the very least was not one of Gregory's defenders. Maraval suggests that Gregory's Word/Man Christology did not commend itself to certain partisans of Nicaea, since it seemed to imperil the immutability of the divine Word and to involve the divine nature in change. It was not impossible that Cyril, with his Word/Flesh Christology was among these objectors. See letter 3.12–13 and note.

¹¹⁰ *From Glory to Glory*, 1961/1995 repr. p. 7.

¹¹¹ *Chronologie* 361.

Another work completed soon after his great journey south, probably through the winter of 381/382, was the VSM, since the introductory letter mentions his recent trip south from Antioch. The VSM is a much more considered reflection on the events surrounding his sister's death that he had reported briefly in **letter 19** shortly after the event.

May¹¹² considers that the *On the Holy Spirit, against the Macedonians* was another follow-up of the 381 council, since in discussing the worship of the Holy Spirit, it deals with quite specific comments of the Pneumatomachians that seem to have arisen in oral controversy, and the work evinces key words on the Holy Spirit added to the Nicene creed by the council.

During 382 Gregory completed the second book of his *Contra Eunomium*¹¹³ a reply to the second book of Eunomius' *Apologia pro Apologia*, and in it he alludes to his own *Hexaemeron*.¹¹⁴ There is a passage in the introduction to this work in which Gregory represents his own motivation in working so hard to combat heterodox theologians. It is also an excellent example of the perfect marriage in Gregory of rhetorical art and transparent personal sincerity:

Let no one think that it is through love of honour or desire of human glory that I go down eagerly to grapple with the foe in this truceless and implacable war. For if it were possible for me to lead a peaceful life not meddling with anyone, it would be far from my inclination to willingly disturb my tranquillity and by offering provocation of my own accord to stir up a war against myself. But now that the City of God, the Church, is besieged, and the great wall of the faith is battered by the encircling engines of heresy, and there is no small danger that the word of the Lord may be swept into captivity by the onslaught of demons, I consider it a fearful thing not to take part in the *agonia* of Christians. Hence I have not turned aside to tranquillity, but regard the sweat of these toils as preferable to the tranquillity of repose.¹¹⁵

There is no particular evidence that Gregory attended the follow-up synod in Constantinople in 382, which has led some to propose that his trip to Arabia may be dated to this year rather than the

¹¹² 'Die Chronologie,' p. 59.

¹¹³ Appearing as *C.E.* XIIB or XIII in *PG* 45.909–1121, now restored by Jaeger as *C.E.* II, GNO 1.226–409; tr. NPNF ser. 2 vol. 5, 250–314.

¹¹⁴ GNO 1.291 line 28.

¹¹⁵ *C.E.* II, GNO 1.228 lines 7–21.

previous year. But it seems probable that he used the time to labour on his dense theological writing. Through another productive winter and into 383, Gregory finally finished the third book of his *Contra Eunomium*, a huge tome, by far the longest of controversial writings against Eunomius, and indeed of any of his works.¹¹⁶

In that year (383) Peter was in his early days as bishop of Sebasteia. There occurred to him an excellent way of consolidating his own position and confirming his church in sound faith. He had the relics of his predecessor Bishop Peter I of Sebasteia brought back to the metropolis and decided to establish the cult of his predecessor on the great *dies memorabilis* of the city: the Feast of the Forty Martyrs, whose cult Peter I himself had once established. Symbolically the whole exercise was to represent a return to the unity of the faith of 'the olden times', after the long hiatus of the first Peter's successors, Eulalius and Eustathius.¹¹⁷ Peter II invited his famous brother Gregory to attend the festivities and to preach, and so Gregory came to Sebasteia in far happier circumstances than his visit in 380 (**Letter 1.5b**). It was then that Gregory delivered his *First homily on the Forty Martyrs*, divided into two parts, 1a and 1b, at Sebasteia—not, Daniélou argues,¹¹⁸ during his sojourn there in 380, but during Lent 383.¹¹⁹ This accords well with the date of the martyrs' feast day: 9 March. The second part would then have been delivered on the following day, 10 March 383. While staying in Sebasteia Gregory no doubt took counsel with his brother Peter over his current literary task, the *Contra Eunomium* III.

The emperor Theodosius convened another council at Constantinople in May 383, at which he required representatives of the Eunomians and the Pneumatomachians to submit professions of their faith. It was on this occasion that Gregory preached his dogmatic homily *On the divinity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*, the themes of which accorded precisely with the object of the council. In speak-

¹¹⁶ It appears as *C.E.* Book III-XII in *PG* 45.572–908, now restored by Jaeger as *C.E.* III in GNO 2.1–311; tr. NPNF ser. 2 vol. 5, 135–229.

¹¹⁷ 'of olden times', from Gregory's comments on the disunity in the faith at Sebasteia, letter 19.7. Eulalius (probably Eustathius' father) had been on Arius's side at the council of Nicaea; Eustathius, a Homoiousian in league with Basil in the 360s against Eunomius, turned against Basil in the 370s, when he espoused a Pneumatomachian position and courted Valens' favour.

¹¹⁸ *Chronologie* 362.

¹¹⁹ Daniélou thinks that letter 1 is to be dated later in the 380s.

ing of ‘the four royal luminaries’, Gregory was referring obliquely to Arcadius, whom his father had appointed *Augustus* on January 16 that year. It is in this homily that we find his famous characterization of the overheated theological atmosphere in the eastern capital:

It is a city full of earnest theological disputes, everyone talking and declaiming in the squares, in the market places, at the cross-roads, in the alley ways. If you ask anyone for change of silver, he will debate with you whether the Son is begotten or unbegotten. If you ask for the price of a loaf, you will receive the answer ‘The Father is greater, the Son is less’. If you ask whether the bath is prepared, you will be solemnly told that ‘There was nothing before the Son was created’.¹²⁰

During this council Eunomius presented his *Profession of Faith*. Gregory subsequently wrote a detailed critique of it for the Emperor. This in a way constitutes a ‘fourth’ treatise against Eunomius, though it is not really part of the ordered sequence of Gregory’s own books.¹²¹

Gregory very possibly wrote his *On the Soul and the Resurrection* in the following winter of 383/384, since the previous winter had been fully occupied with the *Contra Eunomium* III. He certainly wrote it after the VSM, because it very considerably expands an episode described in VSM 17–18, where he had expressed his desire to revisit his conversation with his sister at greater length. Thus three documents concerning Macrina emanate one from the other in an unfolding, constantly deepening meditation on the events of her life, her doctrine and her death: **letter 19.6–10** is expanded in the form of the VSM; VSM 17–18 in turn is greatly expanded in the form of *On the Soul and the Resurrection*. This latter is in the form of a philosophical dialogue. Macrina figures as the ‘teacher’ who fields the objections raised by Gregory concerning life after death, anthropology (what man was created to be and how this original constitution is affected by the Fall) and eschatology (concerning his ultimate destiny). It shows both a willingness to depart from certain positions taken by Origen and yet maintains Origen’s line on *apocatastasis*, the idea of a final restoration of all things in God and the cessation of evil and Hell—a position, it might be noted, vigorously repudiated by Basil in his *Shorter Responses* 267.

¹²⁰ *Oratio de deitate Filii et Sancti Spiritus* 4, PG 46.553–576 at 557–558.

¹²¹ In the confusing rearrangements of Gregory’s C.E. of a later era, it was used to replace the original C.E. II. It appears as C.E. II in PG 45.464–572, now restored by Jaeger as *A Refutation of Eunomius’ Profession*, GNO 2.312–410; tr. NPNF ser. 2 vol. 5, 101–134.

The winter of 384/385 is one of those for which we are least informed about Gregory's activities. So Daniélou¹²² is glad to be able to situate here Gregory's *Against the Pneumatomachoi*, the last of his great dogmatic treatises.

Gregory's spent quite some time at Constantinople in 385, arriving in May for the council that year, and staying until well into the autumn. During this long visit he had many contacts with the intellectual elites and the pagan philosophers of the capital, as he intimates in the treatise *Against Fate* written at the beginning of 386. It must also have about this time that he renewed and deepened his acquaintance with that great and holy lady of Constantinople, Olympias, whom he had probably met for the first time in 381. It was to her that he later dedicated his homilies *On the Song of Songs*.

Marking the zenith of the honour he was accorded in Theodosius' court, he preached two funeral orations, the first for the emperor's daughter, and the second for his wife. Allusion to the earthquake in Nicomedia on 24 August 358 helps fix the date of *Funeral discourse on Pulcheria*, to 24 August 385. Scarcely a few weeks had passed when Pulcheria's mother, the saintly Empress also died, perhaps 14 September. His *Funeral Oration on the Empress Flacilla* attests the empress's unease and perhaps his own, at the degree to which Arians and pagans continued to flourish in the capital.¹²³

The matter of the pagan intellectuals stayed on Gregory's mind after he returned home. In the winter of 386/387 he completed a comprehensive exposition of the Catholic faith for their use, the *Catechetical discourse*, also known as the *Great Catechesis*. Quasten says of it: 'It represents the first attempt after Origen's *de Principiis* to create a systematic theology. Gregory gives a remarkable presentation of the principal dogmas and defends them against pagans, Jews and heretics. He seeks to establish the whole complex of Christian doctrines on a foundation of metaphysics rather than on the authority of scripture alone.'¹²⁴ His full treatment of the sacraments is noteworthy. Baptism receives much attention, since the doctrine of the Trinity on which Gregory had laboured so long is so intimately bound up with it. He is the first Church writer to attempt to account

¹²² Daniélou, *Chronologie*, p. 364.

¹²³ Daniélou, *Chronologie*, p. 365.

¹²⁴ Johannes Quasten *Patrology* vol. 3 (Allen, Texas: Christian Classis, 2000), 262.

metaphysically for what becomes of the bread and wine in the Divine Liturgy, for which he uses the verbal form of a Stoic term, μεταστοιχειώσις, lit. *trans-elementation* or transformation (ch. 37). Despite its doctrine of *apocatastasis* or universal restoration, which was eventually ruled inadmissible by the Church, the *Catechetical discourse* was a great success and found wide circulation. It can be dated somewhat by the fact that in Chapter 38 he refers to two earlier works, of which one is certainly the *Contra Eunomium* in which he dealt with doctrinal issues polemically, and the other one of a group of small non-polemical treatises *To Ablabius*, *To Simplicius*, or *On Common Notions*. It is in the context of these contacts with cultivated pagans and Gregory's growing interest in liturgical commentary that we might date **letter 4, to Eusebius**, to about 387.

A series of homilies in the Christmas season of 386 attest the sequence of saints' feast-days as celebrated at that time, and give us one of the last glimpses of Gregory as theological polemicist. *On the nativity of Christ*, dated by Daniélou to 25 December 386 is one of the earliest testimonies to the celebration of a feast of the Nativity distinct from Epiphany in the Christian east. This was immediately followed by the *Discourse on Saint Stephen, first martyr*, in which Gregory attacks the *Pneumatomachoi* and the *Christomachoi* (Eunomians). The next day, Sunday 27 December 386, he preached his *Second discourse on St Stephen* which was dedicated for the most part to the Apostles Peter, James and John celebrated on that day. On May 18, 388 he preached another sermon also important for the history of the liturgy, *On the Ascension of Christ*, which is our earliest evidence for a distinct feast of the Ascension.

Throughout the early and mid 380s Gregory played a prominent role as a consultant theologian in the Church of the Eastern empire, specially in the capital and in the churches of eastern Anatolia and upper Syria. It is noticeable that his theological writings become increasingly engaged in Christological issues, stimulated by the growing success of Apollinarism. He wrote two works, the (*Antirrhetic*) *against Apollinaris*, written in c. 383, according to Daniélou,¹²⁵ in 387 according to May,¹²⁶ and the *To Theophilus bishop of Alexandria* written

¹²⁵ J. Daniélou, 'Chronologie', 361.

¹²⁶ G. May, 'Die Chronologie', p. 61, who argues, relying on Lietzmann and Mühlenberg, that Gregory Nazianzen did not learn of Apollinaris' *Proof of the Divine Incarnation*, till 387.

in 385 at the earliest, the year Theophilus became bishop of Alexandria. In these treatises/letters, Gregory reveals a Christology of the Antiochene Word/Man type, in which he strongly defending the integrity in Christ of both the divine and human natures. Christ is not whole God and a 'half man', but definitely whole God and whole man, however precisely his unity be accounted for, and Gregory makes an earnest attempt to do so. Gregory refutes the Apollinarian notions that the body of Christ somehow descended from heaven or that the Divine Word took the place of Christ's rational soul, and lays great stress on the assumption of all that is human in the conception in the womb of Mary. These vital concerns of his theological ministry inform his **letter 32, to the monk Philip**, which bridges the themes of Theology and Christology, of Arianism and Apollinarianism.

Gregory's interest in the figure of Mary should also be noted. She appears surprisingly often in his writing. It has perhaps not yet attained to personal devotion, we are not sure, but it is certain that a latent Mariology is emerging. His interest in Mary was prompted by several concerns: his esteem for dedicated virginity as the loftiest form of spiritual endeavour, the extraordinary concomitants of her virginity in particular and by the necessity of giving as accurate an account as possible for the conception of Christ in her womb. Lest Gregory's Antiochene type of Christology mislead us into thinking him some kind of pre-Nestorian, Gregory acquits himself of statements that Cyrillians of the following century would be very pleased to hear. He employs the ancient Alexandrine epithet of Mary as the *Theotokos*, the 'God-bearer' (**letter 3.24**).

THE FINAL YEARS: GREGORY AS MYSTICAL THEOLOGIAN, 387–394

While Theodosius remained in Constantinople, Gregory of Nyssa had high standing among the bishops of the Eastern empire. As we have seen, he acted on important occasions as the official orator of the imperial court. But the winter of 387/388 marked a watershed for both men.

In 387 Emperor Valentinian II of the west fled to the protection of Theodosius. The following year the Eastern emperor departed for Italy to deal with the usurper Maximus who had broken his oaths.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ See A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* 284–602 vol. 1 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 'Gratian and Theodosius I', 156–169 at 159.

The turbulent political affairs of the west preoccupied Theodosius for the remainder of his life, so that he came to spend most of his time in Italy and Thrace. Ambrose of Milan was the church leader of major importance in this phase of his life. For a few months before he died at Milan on 17 January 395, Theodosius was the last sole Roman emperor of both Eastern and Western empires.

Meanwhile church affairs in the Eastern empire had somewhat settled down, thanks not the least to Gregory's labours through the early-mid 380s. These and other circumstances, such as his age, and the many deaths of family, friends and associates, one after another, the estrangement from Helladius of Caesarea which never found a cure, all contributed to a gradual change in the tenor of Gregory's life. 'The end of the year 387 seems to mark the beginning of a new period in Gregory's life. He retired from the milieu of Constantinople. He ceased to be occupied with theological controversy. He was henceforth to dedicate his life to strengthening the spiritual and doctrinal bases of Basil's monastic work. From this moment he began to write his mystical commentaries on the Old Testament and develop his own spiritual doctrine of *epectasis*. The two are connected for he needed to ensure a scriptural foundation for his mystical theology.'¹²⁸

Thus in the last ten years of his life, c. 385–394 Gregory's writings focussed increasingly on the nature of progress in the spiritual life, which he expounded chiefly by means of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture. To this period belong the *Life of Moses*, perhaps written in c. 391–392, and his final testament as it were, his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, completed with a dedicatory letter to St Olympias of Constantinople.¹²⁹ It is in this last phase of Gregory's life that Pouchet¹³⁰ would situate the intriguing letter to Theodore which is included in this collection as **letter 36**.

Gregory was now freer to give himself to a task which had always been his concern: the encouragement of the monastic communities which had been fostered by St Basil. Yet in continuing Basil's role of spiritual fatherhood Gregory did not concern himself with the

¹²⁸ A translation of Daniélou, 'Chronologie', 368.

¹²⁹ I was tempted to include the prefatory letter in the supplementary collection as an example of a letter to an educated woman of high spiritual purpose, but the letter is intended expressly as the preface to his exegetic homilies on the *Song*.

¹³⁰ 'Une Lettre Spirituelle de Gregoire de Nysse identifiée', 46.

practical arrangements of the communities. That had been largely taken care of by the long years of Basil's catecheses which had been collected and edited in the *Great Asketikon*, and no doubt by Peter's continuing role as a monastic leader in Basil's lineage, and by other competent superiors in Basil's mould. The reform of the Christian ascetic life spearheaded by Basil in eastern Anatolia was fairly established. Gregory addressed himself instead to the inner quality of the spiritual life of the monks and virgins who lived in those monasteries, which was essentially the same thing as a concern with the ultimate goal of the life in Christ of *all* Christians. As he focussed his thinking in this direction he gathered together the spiritual strands of his own life, the slow stages of mistakes, adversities and struggles through which he had passed, the labours of rational thought and argument and pastoral generosity to which he had given himself, and the maturation that had been wrought in him over the years, into a brilliant and inspiring spiritual synthesis. We find him now in complete command of a substantive mystical theology. In his doctrine of the spiritual life, based intimately on both faith and dogma—on 'true theology' (**letter 34.1**), forensic reason, imagination, humble obedience to the commandments and life in the Church attain their end in an unswerving desire for the supremely and infinitely beautiful that is God alone.

Whether his earlier speculative writings are adequately characterized as 'religious philosophy' or not, one cannot avoid the impression that in these latter writings Gregory himself has moved to another spiritual echelon. His words are lit up from within by a profound spiritual élan. He is deeply, personally engaged in the ultimate truths and beauties of which he speaks so eloquently. Just one passage from these later writings might be called upon here as a last signature in these pages of his mature mind and heart. He speaks of the Bride of the Song of Songs, the figure of every soul that truly seeks God:

The soul, having gone out at the word of her Beloved, looks for Him but does not find Him . . . In this way, she is in a sense, wounded and beaten because of the frustration of what she had been longing for, now that she thinks that her yearning for the Other cannot be fulfilled or satisfied. But the veil of her grief is removed when she learns that the true satisfaction of her desire consists in continuing to go on with her quest and never ceasing in her ascent, seeing that every fulfilment of her desire continually generates a further desire for the Transcendent. Thus the veil of her despair is torn away and the bride realizes that she will always discover more and more of the incomprehensible and

unhoped for beauty of her Spouse throughout all eternity. Thereupon she is torn by an even more urgent longing, and she . . . communicates to her Beloved the affections of her heart. For she has received within her God's special dart, she has been wounded to the heart by the barb of faith, she has been mortally wounded by the arrow of love. And *God is love*.¹³¹

The last record of Gregory alive is his presence in a synod at Constantinople in 394, where his name appears on a list of participants. 'The prophecy of Basil had come true. Nyssa was ennobled by the name of its bishop which appeared on the roll of this Synod between those of the metropolitans of Caesarea and Iconium. Even in outward rank he is equal to the highest.'¹³²

After that he fades from the historical record. Gregory therefore seems to have died forever to this world late in 394 or in 395.

¹³¹ *From Glory to Glory, texts from Gregory of Nyssa's mystical writings*, selected and introduced by J. Daniélou, translated and edited H. Musurillo (Crestwood N.Y.: St Vladimir's Press, 1995), pp. 270–271.

¹³² NPNF, ser. 2, 5.8.

THE LETTERS: A GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GREGORY AS A WRITER OF LETTERS

How few of Gregory's letters have survived when compared with the many letters of Basil and of Gregory Nazianzen! Yet, as Teske points out,¹ one cannot deduce from this fact that Gregory was somehow much more reticent about writing letters than he was about writing his many other works. Hints that he was in fact a frequent letter writer occur throughout the letters of all three Cappadocians. In the very earliest record of his existence, **Basil**, in **letter 14.1**, mentions that his brother has *written* to him expressing his desire to meet with him. Yet, though there must have been many other letters between the two brothers over the years, not one has survived from Gregory to his brother, and alas, only one from Basil to his brother, **letter 58**, which is a somewhat embarrassing monument to their brotherly relations. The letters of Gregory Nazianzen to the younger Gregory were clearly written in the context of years of correspondence between the two men. And yet again, not one letter of the younger Gregory to the elder has survived. In **letter 74**, **Gregory Nazianzen** urges him to write and to keep him abreast of his affairs. Would that we had just one of Gregory's news-bulletins to such a confidant as Gregory Nazianzen!

Other letters and treatises show that Gregory often wrote in response to specific enquiries, which were more often than not requests for help in doctrinal and theological matters. **Letter 19** was written in reply to a letter of enquiry during a critical episode of his life (see **19.4**). Of letters of intercession to civil authorities on behalf of the disadvantaged, so prominent a function of bishops in late antiquity, only one survives, **letter 7**. But there must have been many other such letters, specially if Gregory had any influence with Theodosius' court in the 380s. A great deal then has been lost.

In fact Gregory was so much of a letter writer that the epistolary style tended to inform much of his writing that might be classed

¹ Dörte Teske (intro. tr. & annot.), *Gregor von Nyssa: Briefe* (Stuttgart: Anton Hierseman, 1997), 1.

otherwise. He notes the possible confusion of genres himself in the opening sentence of the VSM, for though it is indeed a *life* of his sister, it was also used as a circular letter and sent out to a range of correspondents, as is proved by the variety of addressees in the inscriptions. Stephen Mitchell even suggested to me that I include the VSM itself in this collection, an idea that has much to recommend it. Indeed, what distinct borderline is there between some of the smaller dogmatic treatises written as letters to named persons, e.g. *To Ablabius, that there are not three gods*, or *To Simplicius, on the holy Faith* on the one hand, and letters written on doctrinal topics on the other hand, e.g. **letter 3**, *to Eustathia and Ambrosia*, **letter 5**, *to those who discredit his orthodoxy*, **letter 24** *To Heracleianus*, or **letter 32**, *To the monk Philip*? Two letters at any rate are included here, **33 and 35**, which fully inhabit both genres. They are certainly small dogmatic treatises, but unmistakably letters too, and since they were published for so long among St Basil's letters, we will include them in that genre now under their rightful author's name.

EARLY SUB-COLLECTIONS OF LETTERS

If so much of Gregory's correspondence has been lost, one may wonder how any of Gregory's letters come to survive at all?

In the Pasquali collection, it may be observed that the manuscripts fall into two broad groups; **letters 1–3**, which have come down in separate manuscript traditions, and **letters 4–30** which have come down for the most part in three manuscripts with a common source. It seems reasonable to suppose that **letters 4–30** more or less represent an early compilation of letters.

Within this slender collection it is possible to discern two sub-collections. One is a small bundle of letters emanating from the crisis at Sebasteia in early-mid 380. Increasingly scholars have come to situate several letters in the specific circumstances of Gregory's election as metropolitan of Sebasteia and its aftermath.² The relevant letters are **5, 10, 12, 18, 19, 22**. It seems that there was a copy-

² In Müller's opinion ('Der Zwanzigste Brief', 83, n.1) no letters survived before 380 or after 381. Maraval, *Lettres*, 18, n.1, considers that too narrow a period, but agrees that the whole period for dating Gregory's extant letters is relatively short, perhaps a dozen years or so.

book of letters from this disturbing episode in Gregory's life.³ Since Gregory was in such a politically delicate situation where any word or utterance of his was liable to scrutiny, he very possibly kept a copy-book himself.

Secondly, one notices the number of letters which have a very literary, and one might even say *secular* tone. Gregory in **letter 11.1** refers to his 'custom' of beginning letters with a text or passage from Scriptures. The fact that within the **4–30** collection only **letters 7 and 17** bear this out, suggests that a disproportionate number of the letters that have survived was selected on a criterion of secular 'literary' qualities, in which scriptural citations were less pertinent. Gregory Nazianzen himself made a primitive collection of his own letters made as specimens of epistolary style for his grand-nephew Nicobolus.⁴ Similarly Gregory of Nyssa may also have made a copy-book of letters to illustrate the epistolary style,⁵ perhaps for the benefit of his son Cynegius, or for some other forum of student interest. The Hellenist manner and only the merest hint of Christian themes, if any, are characteristic of these letters: **letters 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 23, 26, 27, 28**. The disproportionate representation of this type of letter due to unknown circumstances of choice may convey a somewhat skewed impression of Gregory's character.

It seems that the compiler of the early collection of Gregory's letters had simply to combine these two prior sub-collections, and add but very few others, no doubt all he or she could find to hand. Significantly, among these new letters was the fervently religious and hortatory **letter 17**, coming from very late in Gregory's life. Since this was a formal and ecclesiastical letter, a copy was possibly kept in Nyssa, where the primitive collection may have been compiled. These additional letters, together with the first three letters incorporated into his edition by Pasquali, and the theological and other letters recovered by scholars from false attributions or from obscure trails of manuscripts and offered in the Supplement of this volume redress a potential imbalance of subject matter and enable us to gain a rounder view of Gregory's interests as a letter writer.

³ Pasquali's suggestion, 'Le lettere', 93, supported also by Müller in the note above.

⁴ See Gregory Nazianzen Letters 51–55.

⁵ See also Maraval, *Lettres* 43.

RHETORIC AND STYLE IN GREGORY'S LETTERS

Gregory was a professional rhetorician for eight years, and rhetoric marks his style in every way. Of course, when we say 'rhetoric', we must eschew any hint of a pejorative sense as in 'mere rhetoric'. It means a highly trained ability to express oneself skilfully in words by one whose mind is well stocked not only with elegant examples of word-play but also with the highest representatives of Hellenic culture, pre-eminently philosophy, but also the sciences of the day. At its best it enables the practitioner to express the sincerest and most transparent sentiments in an eloquent and persuasive manner. Traditional Hellenic culture and a thoughtful, enquiring and impassioned Christian faith cohabited in Gregory to a remarkable degree, making for his complex and versatile personality. The art of rhetoric became second nature to Gregory and is *always* in evidence in his writing, even in such impromptu cries of the heart as **letter 22**. The relative restraint in its use that was characteristic of Basil was not true of Gregory.

The intention here is to give the reader in English a sufficient overview of Gregory's style to enhance the appreciation of his letters.⁶ We begin our survey by noting aspects of his vocabulary, and then a few of his most characteristic rhetorical figures.

Gregory constantly sought out variety, nuance and texture, and hence the vocabulary of his letters, as in his other works is rich, dense and supple, not to mention at times obscure. Examples of some of his most characteristic features are as follows:

- The use of 'compound-compound' words, i.e. words with double and occasionally even triple qualifying prefixes, most frequently with the prefix συν- e.g. ἀνεπίμικτον (15.1), προσαναπαύουσα (2.6), ἐξελάφρυνας (20.18, not found in lexicon), συνεπεσπάσατο (25.13), ἐπανακλήτεον 4.4, καθυπερκείμενα (25.14), συνεπινοεῖται (35.4c) προκαταυγασθέντα, (35.4c), παρεμπτόξεως, (35.4i), ἐπανακλᾶσθαι (35.5c), ὑπεραναβεβηκότων (35.5h), διεξαγόμενον (35.7a), συνυπολαμβάνειν 33.7d.

⁶ Technical studies of Gregory's style begin with L. Méridier, *L'influence de la seconde sophistique sur l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nysse* (Rennes, 1906). Owen, E. C. E., 'St Gregory of Nysa: Grammar, Vocabulary and Style', *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1925), 64–71, dealing with the *Contra Eunomium*, may be usefully consulted; see now the magisterial C. Klock, *Untersuchungen zu Stil und Rhythmus bei Gregor von Nyssa. Ein Beitrag zum Rhetorikverständnis der griechischen Väter* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1987). For a more extended treatment of style in the letters, see especially Maraval, *Lettres*, 'Le lettré', 43–50.

- neologism and hapax: Gregory is not only versatile but inventive with words, often making them up by means of prefixes, especially συν-. Lampe's Patristic Lexicon often cites his works for instances of *hapax* (attested once). Examples are συμμετεωροπορεῖν (3.2), ἀντεπίραι (7.1), τοὺς θαυματοποιοῦντας (9.1), ἡμιφανῶς (12.1), δυσγρίπιστον (26.1), συμπαραδέξατο (33.4j).
- He has a fund of rare and poetic words, προὔπαρξασα (1.35), κατακρινᾶται (33.5d), νεοθαλῇ (12.1) Dorian dialect, καταπροδιδόναι (33.1d.).

Of the figures of rhetoric perhaps the most recognizable in Gregory is redundancy, that is, needless overstatement for the sake of effect. The same idea is repeated in alternative ways not strictly required for the sense. To give a few examples: 'The gifts that nature bestows on the place as it adorns the land with unstudied grace' **20.5**; 'why is it only then, when the night has advanced to its further limit and the nocturnal increase admits no more addition . . .' **4.1**; that the illumined life should reach its maximum extent as it grows through increments of the good, **4.7**, 'things plural and numerically diverse' **35.2a**.

Gregory tends to an elaborate periodic style. Consider the introduction of **letter 18** for example, or the single sentence of intricate argument in **3.24** which occupies 18 lines in Maraval, or the lengthy rhetorical question of **4.4** which covers 14 lines in Maraval, and the long complicated sentence at **7.4** expressed somewhat obscurely.

He is always attuned to the oral quality of his language in what was after all very much an oral culture. His written treatises and letters were usually destined not for private sight reading but to be read out loud (declaimed?) and often shared in company, as he himself describes if in **letters 13** and **15**. Accordingly he made much use of devices of resonance. He often repeats the same word in different forms with slightly altered meanings (paronomasia, parechesis). An example is the play on words which fills the entire brief note which is **letter 23**: φείδομαι πολλῶν λόγων, ἐπειδὴ φείδομαι τῶν σῶν καμάτων . . . ἔξει τῇ Φαιδίμῳ. Some other very obvious examples are: κηρυσσομένης . . . κηρύσσουσι . . . κηρυσσομενῶ 3.9; Ὡς καλὰ τῶν καλῶν . . . τοῦ προτοτύπου κάλλους 18.1. The use can actually be very effective in a theological context: μόνος μονογενῶς ἐκ τοῦ ἀγεννήτου φῶτος 35.4e.

Devices of court-room pleading add vividness. There is, for example, the rhetorical question and *prosopopoiia* (invoking the person concerned) in **2.2**: 'let him ask himself why something that neither renders us blessed nor directs us to the Kingdom should be made

an object of our zeal?' Compare also the series of forensic questions as in a Stoic diatribe, in **3.23–24**.

Touches of irony and humour also add a vivid quality. The droll irony of **1.12** where he speaks of Helladius' admitting him to the 'inner shrine' might even verge on sarcastic. Such irony fills the letter. More pleasant and more familiar with Gregory is irony used with a gentle humour, in **15.3**, for example, when he speaks of 'stirring the boldness of youth with the eagerness of old age', or when in **25.16** Mammon is personified as having a grudge against Gregory for his poverty. In **27.1–2**, he even parodies the pretensions of rhetoricians, when he jests in reply to Stagirus's light mockery about the 'secret sanctuary' of Plato, and in **27.4** when he compares the number of rafters to the number of soldiers at Thermopylae.

Gregory shared the keenness of contemporary orators for antithesis and parallelism in all their varieties. Of course, the very nature of classical Greek language seems almost scored for antithesis, but it was a feature especially cultivated in the late 4th century 'sophistic'. Excellent examples of antithesis occur in **letter 2**, in 2.18, when he says Scripture teaches us to '*quit the body to be with the Lord* (2 Cor 5.8) rather than quit Cappadocia to be in Palestine', and in **letter 2.20**: with 'according to the analogy of faith, not according to their absence in Jerusalem'. In **18.9** he observes that his enemies are 'retentive of what they have learned and inventive of what they have not learned'. An excellent example of parallelism, including resonant word repetition occurs at **2.7**: 'Where the ear is contaminated, and the eye is contaminated, how is the heart not also contaminated?' A sharp form of antithesis is paradox, which in its most distilled form, oxymoron, really came into its own when dealing with aspects of the Christian faith, as when Gregory tries to express the realization of the Incarnation in **35.4n** as 'a new and strange kind of conjoined separation and separated conjunction.'

Another very distinctive feature of Gregory's style is his use of hyperbole or exaggeration. An excellent specimen occurs in **letter 20**, where he grandiloquently extols Vanota as putting into the shade all the descriptions of renowned beauties in classical literature.

In using Scriptural texts, Gregory is more allusive and less given to express citation than is Basil, e.g. in the following **24.5**: 'when we learnt of 'the Son' we were taught the power shining forth from the first cause to uphold all things (cf. Heb 1.3);' the Scriptural text is understood implicitly and its significance is conveyed without necessarily using the exact terms.

Gregory's skill in imagery is a very important aspect of his style. Under this heading I include generally simile, metaphor and *ecphrasis* or word-pictures. His whole mind is geared to analogy, and indeed it is one of his great gifts as a theologian to be able to suggest the most abstruse concepts by way of similes and metaphors. Sometimes he was very apposite, at other times he could be unrestrained and over elaborate. Some of his similes and metaphors are as follows:

- **2.1** craftsman using a ruler = using the Gospel sayings as a guide of life.
- **3.6–7** the variegated scales of the serpent a figure of the versatility of evil.
- **3.14** simile of the sun's ray illumining the dark = God's illumining our darkness with the true light.
- **3.15** art of medicine = the curative power of divinity in our human nature.
- **4.1** winter solstice and the 'turning' of the light = the increase of the true Light.
- **10.1** The first signs of Spring, = consolation from a friend amidst affliction.
- **12.3** The congealing of ice in winter = the behaviour of locals in their inventiveness for evil.
- **17.4–5** leaks from conduits = secessionists from the church, bishop = administrator of the irrigation canals.
- **17.19–20** ship's pilot = bishop, ships = churches.
- **17.21** metal-worker = bishop.
- **18.7** battlefield manoeuvres = his opponents' methods.
- **19.1–3** portrait-painting = verbal descriptions of persons.
- **19.10** thirsty traveller at noon = himself seeking Macrina.
- **20.8** flare from a great beacon-tower = beauty of a country villa.
- **22.1–2** Jonah in the belly of the whale = his detention at Sebasteia.
- **28.1** erotic language in a double transposition: thorns of roses = lover's jabs = caustic comments from a friend.

Gregory's powers of vivid description are seen most clearly in his use of *ecphrasis*, those vivid evocations of scenes from nature and human activity that add such interest and colour to his narrative. Some instances are:

- **1.12**, the ambiguities and emotional tensions of a profoundly uncomfortable human encounter; the whole letter is a remarkable description of his visit to Helladius in the mountains.

- **6.2** the wonderful picture of threatening rain; again the whole letter is a lively description of his return home to Nyssa after a long absence.
- The whole of **letter 20** is a sustained *ecphrasis* of a visit to a country estate, full of classical allusions and *topoi*, invaluable for its description of the forecourt to a country villa.
- **21.1** charming description of the taming of a dove in order to catch other doves.
- **25** is a detailed description of the design of a *martyrion*, of great interest to the history of architecture.

Ecphrasis often appears as the introductory element of a kind of 'template' that Gregory used when writing a letter. Accordingly, a letter will open immediately with a vivid 'word-picture', usually a description of a scene from nature. Then a transitional sentence follows, usually in the form of a question concerning the meaning of the imagery just evoked. Next follows the 'explanation' of the image and its application to his real purpose in writing. Nowhere is this done more exquisitely than with the imagery of the dove in letter **21**. The pattern may be traced in letters **1** (see note at **1.3**), **4, 9, 11, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 28, 35** and, without the transitional sentence couched as question, in **8, 10, 16, 32**. It is altogether a special feature of Gregory's epistolary style, though not exclusively his.⁷

Having said that, Gregory does have an alternative way of opening his letters. Using the same general template the introductory *ecphrasis* may be exchanged for a short pithy aphorism, perhaps a scriptural saying or a moral drawn from the case he is about to discuss. It is meant to be pungent and arresting. This can be traced in letters **7, 8, 11** (see **11.3**), **15, 23, 24, 26** (by Gregory's correspondent), **32, 33, 34**. Combining both opening ambits, a pithy *sententia* and a graphic image are letters **1** and **37**.

THE PERSONALITY REVEALED IN THE LETTERS

The letters of Gregory yield a picture of a many-sided and rich personality. Gregory, a man of formidable intellectual stature in the

⁷ I have detected it, far less often of course, in Gregory Nazianzen's letters 178, 195, 230.

church of his day and indeed of any age, was also possessed of a sensitive and emotional nature. He was given at times to tears and despondency, and was very appreciative of friends as can be seen in his elation at receiving their letters. His heightened sensibility was wonderfully aware of the beauties and the terrors of nature. He was susceptible to dreams full of forewarning significance. To some extent one might even call him a 'romantic'. He had not only formidable powers of forensic reasoning, but so richly symbolic a sensibility that to him the whole world was a tissue of metaphors leading upward to transcendent realities. One senses that Gregory, in comparison with his brother Basil, was of a less stern temperament—which is not to say weak, even as his intellect, in its speculative and contemplative capacities was more wide ranging. He was absolutely a man of great culture and erudition and never hid it, yet such a culture co-existed with and was subsumed into the most intense Christian faith and the loftiest possible spiritual focus. His Christian humanism was of the most authentic kind since it did not retard but led to mystical transcendence. As compared with Macrina, Basil and Peter, Gregory was slower to grow in his faith, but grow he did, slowly and ineluctably to a resplendent intellectual and spiritual maturity.

For all of his prominence in the 380s as a consulting theologian for Neo-nicene orthodoxy, we gain the impression that, fulfilling Basil's reading of his character, he not infrequently fell short in political savvy (a perhaps not unwinning trait). In other words, practical prudence was not his strong suit. We see evidence of the failure of his efforts to put things right in church affairs in **letters 1, 3, 5, 17, 19** etc. We also see his despondency at the experience in **letter 3.4, 10.2–4, 18.4–10**. He is constantly dismayed and pained at the sheer faithlessness and viciousness of human beings: **letters 12.3, 16.2–3, 19.17–18, 33.1c**. His capacity for indignation can be seen in **letters 1.27–35, 3.25, 29.4–6**. Revealing his sense of self-worth are **letters 3.25, 29.4**. Yet a gentle self-deprecation and realism about himself run through much that he writes, e.g. **19.3** and in the gentle irony told against himself, as in **25.16**.

But he was never one to be disillusioned or bitter or bear a grudge for long. A gentle hope and kindness, and a most attractive capacity for wonder persist through his letters. This man of most sophisticated intellect never lost a certain naivety in dealing with human affairs. **Letters 8.1, 10, 18 and 36** are wonderful testimonies to

his deeply affectionate nature and his capacity for friendship and gratitude; **letter 6** attests the extraordinary affection he could inspire among the ordinary people as a pastor in his local church. **Letters 12** and **21** are expressions of the most exquisite charm and courtesy. **Letter 27** shows him at playful and witty repartee, quite in the manner of Gregory Nazianzen.

On the other hand, the most sober and forensic theological mind is revealed in **letters 3, 5, 24, 32, 33, 34, 35**. At the opposite end of urbane Hellenism **letter 17** attests in Gregory a fervent pastoral solicitude for the churches wholly in the apostolic manner. Gregory's character was nothing if not rich and versatile.

MANUSCRIPTS USED FOR THE PASQUALI EDITION

The following are the manuscripts collated by Pasquali:

- M** codex Marcianus Venetus 79 (Pasq. xi–xv, xxxvii), parchment, 12th cent., beautifully written with few abbreviations; once belonged to Bessarion; an *epistolary* containing 138 Letters of GNaz, 308 Letters of Basil and a few of other authors; Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 1 appears among some mixed Letters in the final part of Nazianzen's collection (f. 73^v–77^v), initially copied without attribution to an author; the learned scribe or contemporary reviser has added in the margin 'This letter is by Gregory of Nyssa, not the Theologian'. Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 2 is assigned to the right author (f. 306–308).
- G** codex Laurentianus Mediceus plut. IV 14 (Pasq. xv–xvi), parchment, end of 10th cent., written by a very fine cursive hand, mutilated by the loss of some folios; contains letters of both Gregory Nazianzen and Basil; Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 1 appears as the last of the Nazianzen collection (f. 85^v) with no sign of attribution to Gregory of Nyssa.
- B** (for Letters 1–2) codex Londinensis Musei Britannici Add. 36749, first part in parchment, 2nd part on paper, end of 10th cent., written in an upright hand using abbreviations at the Greek monastery of Holy Saviour, Messina Sicily; contains 230 Letters of Gregory Nazianzen and several middle Byzantine authors; Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 1 appears at the end of the Nazianzen collection (f. 114–121^v) assigned to Gregory Nazianzen.
- A** codex Romanus Angelicanus 13, parchment, 11th cent., an ex-

- tensive epistolary; contains many Letters of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen and selections from Photios' *Questions* and *Answers* intermingled, other early Byzantine Church writers follow; Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 1 appears on f. 160 as if by Nazianzen.
- E** codex Laurentianus Conv. Soppr. 627, paper, 13th cent., written in a very small, consistent hand with few abbreviations; brought to the Benedictine abbey in Florence in 15th c., filled with various *Byzantina*, some quite rare, e.g. the *Eroticos*, and the Letters from Emperor Theodore Dukas Laskaris; contains a large collection of Nazianzen's letters, besprinkled with some of Basil's and concluding with Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 1, as if by Nazianzen (f. 138).
- D** codex Vaticanus graecus 435, paper, 13th cent., written meticulously by one hand; the spine of the huge volume having unravelled at an early stage, the order of folios is disturbed; a mini-library of Byzantine religious and literary writings (including some Maximus the Confessor), dominated by an interest in Gregory Nazianzen.; Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 1 appears in the very middle of the collection, amid Nazianzen's writings (f. 175^v–177). D tends to preserve trustworthy readings more often than the other codices.
- p** edition of Gregory of Nyssa, Paris, 1615 by Morell, only of value for Letter 1; evidently based on a codex very like E; but since the last part of E has perished, p preserves genuine readings in at least two places.
- O** codex Parisiensis graecus 1268, parchment, 12th cent.
- T** codex Taurinensis bibliothecae nat. C I II (71), paper, beginning of 14th cent. Jaeger's siglum is Q.
- C** codex Parisiensis bibliothecae de l'Arsenal 234, parchment, 11th cent.
- H** codex Hierosolymitanus Sancti Sepulchri 264, of both parchment and paper, contains Gregory of Nyssa's Letter 2 written on paper, 14th cent.
- X** codex Parisiensis graecus 1335, paper, 14th cent.
- K** codex Vaticanus graecus 1455, paper, 13th–14th cent.
- f** codex Laurentianus Mediceus plut. LVIII, 16, paper, 15th cent.
- b** codex Londinensis Musei Britannici Burneianus 75, paper, beginning of 15th cent.
- Φ** common exemplar of f and b.
- v** codex Vindobonensis theologicus graecus 173 Nesse, paper, 15th cent.

- t** codex Thessalonicensis gymnasii I, parchment, 13th cent.
l codex Laurentius Mediceus plut. IX 20, paper, 15th cent.
Π common exemplar of v, t and l.
Q codex Parisiensis graecus 583, paper, 16th–17th cent.
c unknown copy of codex W used by Casaubon.
P codex Patmensis Monasterii Sancti Iohannnis 706, paper, 11th–12th cent.
F codex Laurentianus Mediceus plut. LXXXVI, 13, parchment, 13th cent.
V codex Vaticanus graecus 291, paper, 13th cent., Jaeger's siglum: T.
N codex Barberinianus graecus 291, paper, 14th–15th cent.
L codex Laurentianus Mediceus plut. VI, 17, parchment, 10th–11th cent.
B (for Letter 30) codex Lesbicus Mytilenensis monasterii Sancti Iohannis 6, parchment, 11th–12th cent.
Z codex Vaticanus graecus 1773, paper, 16th cent.
S codex Vaticanus graecus 1907, paper, 13th cent.
β Garnier's edition of Basil (= PG 29–33)
Λ consensus of codices of Libanius
Λ^{var} part of the codices of Libanius
Λ^R codex of Libanius Vaticanus Reginae 18, parchment, 11th cent.
Λ^{Mon} codex of Libanius Monacensis 497, parchment, 11th cent.
Λ^{Bar} codex of Libanius Oxoniensis Baroccianus 121, parchment, 11th cent.

ADDITIONAL MANUSCRIPTS COLLATED BY MARAVAL

- S^{mar}** Cod. Mutinensis Estensis 229, paper 11th cent., not known to Pasquali, containing the scholion which attributes Letter 1 to Gregory of Nyssa.
Cod. Marc. 7.38 Cod. Marcianus Venetus *VII*, 38, parchment, 16th cent., collated and discussed for Letter 2 by Maraval, pp. 65–66.

DATELINE OF THE LETTERS

The dating of the letters proposed here is necessarily tentative. Argument supporting the dating may be found in the prefatory notes of

the individual letters and in the biography above, where all letters mentioned are in bold.

Caesarea	c. 370	Letter 37, <i>to the emperor</i>
Nyssa	mid 378-mid 380?	Letter 6, <i>to bishop Ablabius</i>
Vanota on the Halys	379?	Letter 20, <i>to Adelphius</i>
Sebasteia	early 380	Letter 22, <i>to the Bishops</i>
Sebasteia	early 380	Letter 12, <i>to the same</i>
Sebasteia	early 380	Letter 18, <i>to Otreius</i>
Sebasteia	early 380	Letter 10, <i>to Otreius</i>
Sebasteia	early-mid 380	Letter 19, <i>to a certain John</i>
Sebasteia?	early-mid 380	Letter 5, <i>to those who discredit his orthodoxy</i>
Nyssa	autumn 380	Letter 29, <i>to Peter</i>
Nyssa	autumn 380	Letter 13, <i>to Libanius</i>
Annisa	late 380	Letter 30, <i>to Gregory</i>
Nyssa	c. 380–381	Letter 33, <i>to Eustathius the physician</i>
Nyssa	380?	Letter 7, <i>to Hierius the governor</i>
Caesarea	early January 381	Letter 14, <i>to Libanius</i>
Nyssa	early 381	Letter 35, <i>to Peter his own brother on the divine ousia</i>
Caesarea	late 381	Letter 3, <i>to Eustathia, Ambrosia and Basilissa</i>
Nyssa	late 381–382	Letter 2, <i>to Kensitor</i>
Nyssa?	c. 380–381	Letter 33, <i>to Eustathius the physician</i>
Nyssa	382	Letter 28 [no title]
Nyssa	early 380s	Letter 9, <i>to Stagirus</i>
Nyssa	382	Letter 15, <i>to John & Maximian</i>
Nyssa	c. 382 +	Letter 25, <i>to Amphilochius</i>
Osiana	382 +	Letter 26, <i>from the sophist Stagirus</i>
Nyssa	382 +	Letter 27, <i>Reply of the holy Gregory to the sophist</i>
Nyssa	mid-late 383	Letter 24, <i>to Heracleianus</i>
Nyssa	mid 380s +	Letter 16, <i>to Strategius</i>
Nyssa	mid 380s +	Letter 8, <i>to Antiochanus</i>
Nyssa	mid 380s +	Letter 11, <i>to Eupatrius</i>
Nyssa	Easter 387	Letter 4, <i>to Eusebius</i>
??	mid-late 380s	Letter 8, <i>to Antiochanus</i>
Nyssa?	c. 385–c. 387	Letter 32, <i>to the monk Philip</i>

Nyssa	c. 390	Letter 17, <i>to the presbyters in Nīcomedia</i>
Nyssa	c. 390	Letter 31, <i>to Letoius</i>
Nyssa	late 380s–394	Letter 36, <i>to Theodore</i>
Nyssa?	undated	Letter 23, <i>without title</i>
Nyssa	undated	Letter 21, <i>to Ablabius the bishop</i>

PRELUDE 1: THE LETTERS OF BASIL

The purpose of this section is to assemble all the references to St Gregory of Nyssa in St Basil's letters, representing as they do a period from which no letters of St Gregory (except perhaps one, letter **37**) have survived. These bear witness to Gregory's own writing of letters at this period, as for example, in the first selection below. For the most part only relevant sections are translated, omissions being indicated by: . . . They are listed in the sequence of their relation to Gregory's chronology.

Translations are made from Yves Courtonne, *Saint Basile Correspondence*, 3 vols. 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), Tome I: Lettres I–C, Tome II: Lettres CI–CCXVIII, Tome III: CCIX–CCCLXVI. Also consulted is Roy J. Deferrari's edition and translations *St Basil, The Letters*, in four volumes (London: Heinemann, 1926 1928 1930 1934), hereafter referred to as 'Def'.

Courtonne chose six mss. to collate for his edition.¹ The two main branches in the stemma of Basil's correspondence: A and B, are further divided into subfamilies, three for A, and four for B. Courtonne followed the judgment of several scholars² in regarding Aa as the best family. Accordingly he chose four mss from this family as the basis of his edition, but also chose two other mss. as superior representatives of the B branch. The following are the six principal mss used by Courtonne, with their relevant family noted:

- V** Vatopedinus 72, 10th cent. (Monastery of Vatopedi, Mt Athos), family Aa
- P** Patmiacus 57, 10th cent. (Monastery of St John, Patmos), family Aa
- B** Barroccianus 121, 11th cent. (The Bodleian Library, Oxford), family Aa
- M** Marcianus 61, 11th cent. (The Library of St Mark, Venice), family Aa

¹ On the textual transmission of Basil's letters, see now P. J. Fedwick, *Bibliotheca Basiliana Universalis* I. The Letters (755 pp.). A new edition of Basil's letters is being prepared under Fedwick's guidance.

² Bessières, Turner, Cavallin and Rudberg (Courtonne, xvi).

- L** Laurentianus Mediceus IV–14, 10th/11th cent. (the Laurentian Library, Florence), family Bo
C Parisinus Coislinianus 237, 11th cent. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris), family Bo

Citation of mss. will preserve the A/B family groupings, i.e.: VPBM, LC.

Several other mss. that are not in the above list were also consulted for individual letters. They are noted at the relevant letters.

LETTER 14 *TO HIS COMPANION GREGORY*, EXCERPT³

The letter was written at the end of Basil's year of wandering in Palestine and Egypt, therefore late in 357 AD. It is addressed to Gregory Nazianzen, who had been Basil's companion in Athens as recently as two or three years before. In the interim Basil had been converted to Baptism and the ascetic life by his elder sister Macrina. He has now decided on a spot for his ascetic retreat: in the wooded mountains on the River Iris not far from his mother's villa, Annisa. He is eager to take up his new lifestyle as soon as he can, and tries (successfully in the event) to persuade Nazianzen to join him.

The following is the earliest reference to Gregory of Nyssa in the literary record. He was about 22 years of age at this time. He wrote to Basil, evidently from Caesarea, where he was still a student and was later to be a teacher. Basil reveals that the two Gregorys, his brother and his friend, had also been thinking of joining him in whatever ascetic lifestyle he should work out for himself.

1. Though my brother Gregory wrote to me that he had long been intending to come with us,⁴ and added that you also had decided the same thing, I could not wait, partly because I was very reluctant to believe it for having so often been disappointed, and partly because I was torn every which way by demands. For I had to set out promptly for Pontus, where some time soon, God willing, we shall cease our wandering. For after renouncing with difficulty those vain hopes which I once had in you—or rather dreams, if I may speak more truly, for I praise him who said that hopes are waking

³ Mss.: VPB, LC, ed.: Courtonne I, 42–45, Def 1.106–111, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.124–125.

⁴ *παλαὶ βούλεσθαι ἡμῖν συντυχεῖν*. The context suggests that *συντυχεῖν* refers to more than simply a meeting or a talk, hence the translation.

dreams—I departed for Pontus in search of a place of abode. There indeed God showed me a spot exactly suited to my purpose, so that I see in truth before my eyes what I have often pictured to my mind in my idle fancies . . .

LETTER 223 *To EUSTATHIUS OF SEBASTEIA*, EXCERPT⁵

This letter, addressed to Eustathius of Sebasteia was written in mid 375. It marks the climax of Basil's rupture with Eustathius and is the most autobiographical of all Basil's writings. He gives his mature account of his religious upbringing as a child and his motives in undertaking the ascetic life nearly twenty years earlier. By the term *μονή*, the ascetic retreat on the Iris is meant, not the villa where Emmelia, Macrina and the young Peter lived. Hence the period to which the excerpt below refers is 358–362, the first period of Basil's ascetic life in Pontus.

By the time of Basil's second sojourn in Pontus, 363–365, the earlier experiment for male ascetics by the River Iris had been superseded, because by that time the community at Annisa under Macrina's direction had found a way of constituting itself as an integral monastic community, incorporating a house for male ascetics, of whom the first was Peter. This was the very period Gregory of Nyssa left to take up the profession of rhetoric in Caesarea (see **G. Nazianzen letter 11**).

This letter proves that Gregory of Nyssa, during his twenties, spent time pursuing the ascetic life with Basil in the retreat on the Iris. He was certainly baptized, was set on the path to priesthood, and in the context of the ascetic life, had possibly not taken an express vow of virginity, but was understood to be committed to it implicitly.

Basil reminds Eustathius of his familiarity with his brother because at the time of writing (375), Gregory is the target of a sustained attack by Eustathius and his circle, who have allied themselves with Valens' Arian agenda in order to thwart Basil and his circle.

5. Ask yourself, how often did you visit us in the monastery⁶ on the river Iris, when, moreover, our most God-beloved brother Gregory was present with me, accomplishing the same goal of life as myself? . . . And how many days did we spend in the villa on the other side, at my mother's, living there as a friend with a friend, with conversation astir among us day and night?

⁵ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne III, 8–17 at 14, Def 3.286–313 at 302–303, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.262–265 at 264.

⁶ ἐπὶ τῇς μονῆς, lit. 'abode', frequently with the sense of hermitage or monastery.

LETTER 60 *To THE DIVINE GREGORY*⁷

This letter was written very early in 371 to Basil's maternal uncle, bishop Gregory. It is the first of three connected letters, whose correct chronological sequence is letters **60, 58, 59**. Strange to relate, uncle Gregory was in sympathy with those bishops who had opposed Basil's election as metropolitan of Caesarea and who maintained their disaffection afterward for some time. Gregory of Nyssa, then still working as a teacher of rhetoric in Caesarea, ineptly and clumsily attempted to bring about a rapprochement between Basil and their uncle, it seems by forging three letters as if from their uncle Gregory to Basil (Basil, letter **58**). In the following letter Basil writes to his uncle concerning the first of the apparently forged letters, which had been delivered by Gregory of Nyssa himself.

In times past I have always been pleased to see my brother—and why not, since he is both my own brother, and such a man! And at the present time I have welcomed him on his visit in just the same disposition, having in no way altered my affection for him. May no such misfortune ever befall me as to forget nature and be set at enmity with my own kin! On the contrary, I have considered the presence of the man to be a consolation both for the infirmities of the body and for the afflictions of the soul and I was especially delighted with the letter he brought from your Honour. I had long been eager it would come, for one reason only—that we might not, as others have done, add to our life a melancholy tale of a quarrel that divided kin against each other, which would bring pleasure to enemies and sadness to friends. It would also be displeasing to God, who has laid down that the distinguishing mark of his disciples is perfect love. So I reply, as I must, begging you to pray for us and to care for us in other respects, as your kin.

As for making sense of what has happened, since we ourselves, in our ignorance, cannot understand it, we have decided to accept as true whatever explanation you have been so good as to give us. But as to the other matters, they must also be determined by your magnanimity—our meeting with each other, a suitable time and a convenient place.

So if your dignity can bear at all to descend to our lowliness and share some speech with us, then, whether you desire our meeting

⁷ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne I, 150–151, Def 2.10–13, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.161.

to be in the presence of others or by ourselves, we shall answer the summons, for we are resolved once and for all to *serve you in love* (cf. Gal 5.13) and in every way do whatever your Piety writes that we should do, to the glory of God.

As to our most venerable brother, we have not obliged him to tell us anything by word of mouth, because his words on a former occasion were not born out by the reality.

LETTER 58 *TO HIS BROTHER GREGORY*⁸

This is the only surviving letter we have from Basil to his brother Gregory. Alas, it is not exactly a monument to brotherly accord, though the signs of Basil's esteem for his brother are still here. The letter was written early in 371, at some interval after the preceding letter. Basil's appeal to his brother at 58.9 is a precious window on his wish to win Gregory for the service of the church at this time. The mention of Gregory's servants in this letter indicates that he is still maintaining a household and a secular career in Caesarea.

Basil famously uses two terms, more or less synonymous, to describe his brother's political behaviour: χρηστότης (kindness, soft-heartedness, good nature to the point of silliness, fatuousness, naïveté) and ἀπλότητος (simplicity, open-heartedness, guilelessness in a negative sense, childishness, naïveté).

1. Would that I could contend with you by letter! Would that I could confront your utter naïveté as it deserves!⁹ Who, tell me, ever falls into the same net a third time? Who ever falls into the same snare a third time? Scarcely even irrational animals succumb to this!

2. You forged a letter and brought it to me as if from our common uncle, the most reverend bishop, deceiving me, I know not for what reason. I received it as sent by the bishop through you. Why should I not have done so? Overjoyed, I showed it to many of my friends. I gave thanks to God.

3. The fraud was exposed, the bishop himself disowning it with his own lips. We were thoroughly put to shame by it. We prayed that the earth might open up for us, overwhelmed as we were by the reproach for unscrupulousness, falsehood and deceit.

⁸ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne I, 145–147, Def 1.356–361, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.159.

⁹ πῶς δ' ἂν ἀξίως σου καταψαίμην τῆς περὶ πάντα χρηστότητος.

4. Again they delivered me a second letter as sent to me by the bishop himself through your servant¹⁰ Asterius. But it was not genuine, as the bishop himself protested before our most reverend brother Anthimus,¹¹ who told us.

5. And now there comes Adamantius¹² bringing us a third letter. How could I possibly accept any letters brought by you or yours? I might have prayed for a heart of stone so as not to have any memory of past events or be aware of present ones, but endure every blow as the cattle do, my head bowed to the ground. But what is become of my reason when, after a first and a second experience, I can admit nothing without investigation!

6. I write these words to confront your simplicity,¹³ which in other circumstances I consider fitting to Christians but which ill accords in the present situation, in order that you may at least guard yourself for the future and spare me; because—for I must speak frankly with you—you are no trustworthy minister in such affairs. 7. Well then, whoever the authors may be, we have sent them a suitable answer. Whether, therefore, you were trying me out each time you sent the letter, or whether you really received it from the bishops, you have my answer.

8. But as for you, in the present situation you ought to have been mindful that you are my brother, and not yet have forgotten the ties of nature, still less regarded us in the part of an enemy, for we have come to a life that is not only wearing out our body, but even ruining our soul as well, so far does it exceed our strength. 9. Yet for all this, since you entered the fray,¹⁴ you ought for this very reason to be beside me now, sharing my troubles. For it is said *Brothers are a help in time of necessity* (Wis 40.24).

10. If the most reverend bishops are in fact willing to meet us, let them indicate a definite time and place, and let them send for us through their own agents. For, though I myself do not refuse to face my own uncle, yet, unless the invitation comes in the due and proper form, I shall not support it.

¹⁰ τοῦ οἰκέτου σου, household/domestic slave.

¹¹ Bishop of Tyana, soon to be at loggerheads with Basil after Valens' division of Cappadocia. See Basil, Letters 120, 121, 122, 210.

¹² He is evidently another domestic of Gregory of Nyssa's household.

¹³ τῆς σῆς ἀπλότητος, fatuity.

¹⁴ ἐκπεπολέμωσαι, i.e. drawn into the ecclesiastical politics surrounding Basil's election, while trying only to be a peacemaker.

LETTER 92 *TO THE ITALIANS AND GAULS*, EXCERPT¹⁵

This letter was written in 372¹⁶ to the bishops of the west, on behalf of the alliance of Neo-nicene bishops in Cappadocia and in the diocese of 'Oriens' headed by Meletius of Antioch. There are two Gregorys mentioned here. The first is surely Gregory Senior of Nazianzus. His son, Gregory Nazianzen, at this stage is not operational as a bishop—having retired from Sassima to assist his father at Nazianzus. From the letters above, uncle Gregory might reasonably be ruled out. So the second is quite possibly Gregory of Nyssa, newly ordained a bishop, in which case this would be the first historical reference to Gregory as bishop.

To our most God-beloved and most holy brothers, fellow-ministers in Italy and Gaul, bishops of like mind with us, we Meletius, Eusebius, Basil, Bassus, Gregory, Pelagius, Paul, Anthimus, Theodotus, Vitus, Abraham, Jobinus, Zeno, Theodoret, Marcian, Barach, Abraham, Libanius, Thalassius, Joseph, Boethus, Atrius,¹⁷ Theodotus, Eustathius, Barsumas, John, Chosroes, Iosaces, Narses, Maris, Gregory, Daphnus, greetings in the Lord . . .

LETTER 98 *TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA*, EXCERPT¹⁸

According to Loofs¹⁹ this letter was written in June 372 at Sebasteia, shortly after Valens' division of Cappadocia. Fedwick²⁰ would date it to the same month, but a year later. Basil refers to a recent meeting with Eustathius of Sebasteia, rumours of whose doctrinal slipperiness were reaching him, though for the present, Eustathius has convinced him of his orthodoxy. Here Basil answers the regret expressed by Eusebius of Samosata that Basil's brother was not been appointed to a more important see. Eusebius was one of Basil's greatest mentors, friends and collaborators in the Neo-nicene cause, who co-consecrated him a bishop in 370.

¹⁵ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne I, 198–203 at 198, Def 2.132–145 at 132–133, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.177.

¹⁶ Fedwick, *Basil of Caesarea, Christian, Humanist, Ascetic* p. 13.

¹⁷ ἰατρίος (physician) C. Maran plausibly reads Otreios (of Melitene).

¹⁸ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne I, 211–213 at 213, Def 2.164–171 at 132–133, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.182.

¹⁹ *Eustathius von Sebaste und die Chronologie der Basilius-Briefe*, p. 30.

²⁰ Op. cit., p. 16.

... I had also wished that my brother Gregory²¹ were governing a church commensurate with his gifts. But that would have been the whole Church under the sun gathered into one! But since this is impossible, let him be a bishop who does not receive his dignity from the place but from whom the place receives its dignity. For it is the part of a truly great man not only to be equal to great things, but also to make little things great by his own power. . . .

LETTER 100 *TO EUSEBIUS, BISHOP OF SAMOSATA*²²

According to Loofs²³ this letter was written from Armenia in July or August 372. Fedwick²⁴ places it at the end of June, 373, in the same circumstances as letter **98**.

Basil, in speaking of his brother's 'plotting against' him (100.7), uses hyperbole. It means that Gregory, newly a bishop, is still displaying that 'simplicity' or 'naïveté', that want of politic judgment, this time in ecclesiastical affairs, for which Basil upbraided him in letter **58** before his brother had become a bishop. Here it appears that, against Basil's wishes, Gregory has made contact with the Old Nicenes who had been associated with Marcellus of Ancyra.

Versification is supplied here in the absence of any in Courtonne.

1. I beheld the letter of your Charity in this neighbouring country of Armenia with the same feelings with which those at sea behold a beacon fire shining from afar over the deep, especially if the sea also happened to be whipped up by the winds. **2.** For though the letter of your Reverence possessed sweetness and great consolation in itself, its charm was enhanced by its timeliness. What the circumstances were, and how they pained us, I will not myself say, having decided once and for all to forget my griefs. Our deacon, however, will give your Piety a full account.

3. My body has failed me so completely that I am unable to bear even the slightest movement without pain. Nevertheless, I pray that

²¹ τὸν δ' ἀδελφὸν Γρηγόριον. The early printed editions inserted ἐμὸν, τόν (the personal pronoun made explicit). Tillemont thought Gregory of Nyssa was meant. Maran (*V. Basilii* xxiv) however, argued that it refers to Gregory Nazianzen. Courtonne (xi) is also of this opinion. Note, however, that Basil implies that 'Gregory' is still governing his see; this cannot mean Nazianzen, who never took up the appointment.

²² Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne II, 206–207, Def 2.182–187 at 132–133, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.184.

²³ Op. cit., p. 30.

²⁴ Op. cit., p. 16.

my old longing can now, at any rate, be fulfilled with the help of your prayers; although it is true that this sojourn abroad had caused me great difficulties, since the affairs of our own church have been neglected for so long a time.

4. Yet if, while we are still on earth, God will deem us worthy to see your Piety in our church, we shall have truly good hopes for the future also, that we shall not be wholly excluded from the gifts of God. **5.** Let this take place if possible, we beg you, at the synod we hold every year in memory of the most blessed martyr Euphychius²⁵ on the seventh day of the month of September,²⁶ an event which is now approaching.

6. Moreover, we are encompassed by matters worthy of serious attention which need your collaboration, concerning both the appointment of bishops, **7.** and the investigation and deliberation of the actions meditated against us by Gregory of Nyssa in his simplicity,²⁷ who convenes synods regarding Ancyra and leaves nothing undone to plot against us.²⁸

LETTER 215 *To Dorotheus the Presbyter*²⁹

Basil wrote this letter in the autumn of 375. His letter 243 also mentions Dorotheus who carried a letter for Basil. In **215.3** Basil shows himself of mixed mind with regard to Gregory. He would dearly wish that his brother might be willing to go as envoy of the eastern Neo-nicenes to Pope Damasus of Rome, but he is too aware of his complete lack of political sense (see letters **58** and **100** above) to expect that he would avail in dealing with one whom Basil regards as too haughty to listen to those who would speak candidly of Eastern affairs from intimate acquaintance.

Versification is supplied here in the absence of any in Courtonne.

²⁵ A layman who was martyred during the Emperor Julian's visit to Caesarea in 362, for his part in overthrowing a temple to Fortune. See Sozomen, *H.E.* 5.11. Basil used the annual synod as an occasion to rally his diocese.

²⁶ Basil uses the Latin name: τοῦ Σεπτεμβρίου.

²⁷ καὶ σκέθιν τῶν μελετωμένων καθ' ἡμῶν παρὰ τῆς χρηστότητος Γρηγορίου τοῦ Νυσσαέως.

²⁸ ὃς συνόδους συγκροτεῖ κατὰ τὴν Ἀγκύραν καὶ οὐδένα τρόπον ἐπιβουλεύων ἡμῖν ἀφίησιν. Instead of translating 'convenes synods in Ancyra'—the new bishop of Nyssa is scarcely in any position to be convening synods in the metropolis of Galatia—it is better to understand κατὰ as translated here (L&S Lexicon 883 #Biii, iv2). The reference seems to be to the followers of Marcellus of Ancyra.

²⁹ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne II, 206–207, Def 3.236–239, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.254–255.

1. I promptly availed myself of the opportunity and addressed a letter to that most admirable man, Count Terentius, thinking that it was less suspicious to write to him by means of strangers about the present concerns, while at the same time I did not want to hinder our very dear brother Acacius by any delay in the matter. So I have given the letter to the revenue-collector of the prefect as he set out on the public circuit, and charged him to show the letter first to you.

2. But as for the road to Rome, I do not know why no-one has told your Intelligence that it is quite impassable in winter, the country intervening from Constantinople to our regions being full of those hostile to us. But if it is necessary to go by sea, the time will be right—provided that the most God-beloved bishop, Gregory my brother, agrees both to the sea voyage and to the ambassadorship of matters so important.

3. But for my part, I do not see that there is anyone who can escort him, and I realize that he is quite inexperienced in the affairs of the Church;³⁰ and that although a meeting with him would inspire respect in a kindly disposed man and be worth much, yet with a lofty and elevated personage who is seated somewhere on high and is therefore unable to listen to those who from a lowly position on the ground tell him the truth³¹—what would be the benefit to our common interest from his meeting such as Gregory, whose character is foreign to servile flattery?³²

LETTER 225 TO *DEMOSTHENES*, AS BY COMMON CONSENT, EXCERPT³³

This letter was written in December of 375³⁴ or according to Fedwick³⁵ in June/July of that year. The addressee is Demosthenes, Vicar of the civil diocese of Pontica, an aggressive implementer of Valens' arianizing policies. According to Theodoret's account (*H.E.* 4.16), the emperor Valens and his prefect Modestus had unsuccessfully attempted to intimidate Basil

³⁰ ἄπειρον ὄντα τῶν κατὰ τὰς ἐκκλησίας.

³¹ I.e. Pope Damasus of Rome.

³² ὅς ἀλλότριαν ἔχει θωπείας ἀνελευθέρου τὸ ἦθος.

³³ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne III, 21–23, Def 3.320–325, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.267.

³⁴ Loofs, op. cit., p. 9, n. 2.

³⁵ Op. cit., p. 17.

some four years earlier. In that episode a Demosthenes, superintendent of the imperial kitchen, had also attempted to berate Basil, but was put firmly in his place by Basil.³⁶ Gregory Nazianzen's remarks about the threats of 'the chief cook' in *Oration on Basil* 47 also tend to confirm that the Demosthenes of Theodoret's is the same man in this letter. It would help explain his implacability reported here. In the winter of 375/376 the present Demosthenes had summoned a council at Ancyra in which he tried to secure the arrest and imprisonment of Gregory of Nyssa on what seem rather strained charges of mishandling Church funds and of irregular ordination as bishop.

Basil wrote this carefully crafted official letter to defend Gregory's failure to put in an appearance. Despite the punctilious courtesies, one can scarcely miss a vein of subtle irony—at least on Basil's part, but which might be expected partly to elude Demosthenes, if he was the same man of low culture mentioned above and as is the case in letter **237** below. In reality, Basil is calling Demosthenes' bluff. He knows that the Vicar will not openly assail him, and that he is attempting to injure the Neo-nicene cause by attacking his brother. With scrupulous *politesse*, he intimates to Demosthenes that Gregory is now under his own protection, hidden somewhere, and that henceforth the Vicar should direct his attentions to their real object, himself. He also repeatedly hints that canonical and doctrinal questions are not the business of civil rulers, a brave position to take in the prevailing Constantinian ideology of state and church.

The sequel to these events may be traced in Basil's letters **231** and **237** following.

Versification is supplied here in the absence of any in Courtonne.

... **2.** When we realized that some of the enemies of peace were about to rouse your august tribunal against us, we were expecting to be summoned by your Magnanimity that the truth might be learned from us—if indeed your great prudence were willing to make the examination of ecclesiastical affairs your own concern.

3. But when the tribunal overlooked us, and your authority, moved by the reproaches of Philochares, ordered our brother and fellow-minister Gregory to be arraigned, he obeyed the summons—for how might he do otherwise? But he was seized by a pain in the side, and at the same time because of the chill that came upon him, by a flare-up of an old kidney complaint. **3.** It was necessary, being as he was under the inescapable guard of the soldiers,³⁷ to convey him

³⁶ Cf. also Socrates *H.E.* 4.26 and Sozomen *H.E.* 6.16 for related accounts of his staunch opposition to Valens and Modestus and his survival.

³⁷ Cf. Maraval, 1990, p. 21 n. 1. He suggests that the participle *κατεχόμενος* is causal, and that Gregory, having been arrested, escaped, and was now in a safe place not named by Basil.

to some quiet spot, where his body might receive care, and his unbearable pains find relief. **4.** For this reason we have all come to beseech your Greatness not to be indignant at the delay of the response. For neither was the public good any the worse for our postponement nor were the interests of the Church in any way harmed thereby.

5. But if the question is about money, that it was wasted, the treasurers of the Church funds are at hand ready to give an accounting to anyone who wishes, and to prove the mischief of those who have brazened your careful hearing of the case. For it is easy for them, from the very accounts of the blessed bishop, to make the truth evident to those who seek it.

6. But if it is something else of a canonical nature that requires investigation, and your Magnanimity consents to undertake to hear and to judge it, we all³⁸ need to be present, because if there has been any defect in the canonical procedure, those who did the ordaining are responsible, not he who was constrained, under every necessity, to undertake the ministry.

7. We therefore beseech you to reserve the hearing for us in our fatherland, and not to drag us beyond its borders,³⁹ or bring us to a necessity of meeting bishops with whom we have not yet come to agreement on Church questions. **8.** And at the same time we beg you to spare both our old age and our infirmity. For you will learn by actual investigation, God willing, that nothing pertaining to the canons, either small or great, was omitted in the appointment of the bishop. **9.** We therefore pray that under your rule both agreement and peace with our brothers may be achieved. But since this has not yet come to pass, it is difficult even for us to meet, because many of the simpler folk are being harmed by our dissensions with each other.

³⁸ I.e. the bishops of Cappadocia.

³⁹ εἰς τὴν ὑπερορίαν. A note in the Benedictine edition cites a law of Valens for the year 373 (*Cod. Theod.* 9.1.10): *It is not permitted an accuser to go beyond the borders of the province. The judgments of offences ought to be carried out where the crime is said to have been committed. By the present laws we restrain the transfer of tribunals.*

LETTER 231 *TO AMPHILOCHIUS BISHOP OF ICONIUM* EXCERPT⁴⁰

This letter was written at the end of 375⁴¹ to Basil's protégé and intimate friend, Amphilochius. The tone therefore is very different to that of the preceding letter and we learn Basil's real opinion of Demosthenes. We learn also that though Gregory is perforce absent from his see, he is living in a situation free of worry—i.e. he is not under the control of the civil authorities, because he has fled Demosthenes' jurisdiction. That seems to be the import of the word *ὑπερόριός* used in the previous letter, if it is understood to mean not merely 'abroad', but literally 'beyond the borders', i.e. he is now out of the civil diocese of Pontica, which covered Bithynia, Paphlagonia, Galatia, Pontus, Cappadocia and Armenia.⁴² In short, Gregory has gone south, either to the civil diocese of Asia, which included Isauria, or of *Oriens*, which included Cilicia. This helps explain why he never travelled so far north as Pontus to visit Annisa during his period of exile.

... And know that our most God-beloved brother is over the border,⁴³ not enduring the annoyances of the shameless. And Doara⁴⁴ is in turmoil, for the great fleshy whale⁴⁵ is throwing affairs there into confusion. According to the report of those who know, our enemies are contriving plots against us at court; but thus far *the hand of the Lord has been with us* (Lk 1.66). Only pray that we are not left aside⁴⁶ in the end.

For my brother too continues calm;⁴⁷ and Doara has received the old muleteer⁴⁸—what else can it do?—and the Lord will scatter the plans of our enemies. However, our one relief from all troubles both present and anticipated is in seeing you. Therefore, if it ever becomes possible for you, as long as we are still above ground, deign to come and see us . . .

⁴⁰ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne III, 36–38 at 37, Def 3.358–363 at 361–362, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.272.

⁴¹ Fedwick, op. cit., p.17.

⁴² See R. Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 78.

⁴³ *ὑπερόριός* εὐρεῖται.

⁴⁴ One of the dioceses in Cappadocia Secunda, under the bishop of Tyana.

⁴⁵ I.e. Demosthenes.

⁴⁶ *ἐγκαταλειφθεῖναι*, i.e., not by God, but by political machinations with regard to the Church.

⁴⁷ *διὰ γὰρ ἄνετος*, 'living free of care', or, in the NPNF translation, 'is taking things quietly'.

⁴⁸ This seems to mean an Arian/semi-Arian bishop, once of that menial occupation, instated by Demosthenes. See Letter 239 below.

LETTER 232 *To AMPHILOCHIUS ON HIS ENQUIRIES*, EXCERPT⁴⁹

The date of this letter depends on when the Nativity was celebrated, 25 December or 6 January. The latter seems preferable since in the 370s the Nativity appears still to have been celebrated in the East on January 6. Compare Gregory of Nyssa, letter 4 and notes, a letter written in the late 380s, after Cappadocia had adopted the celebration of the Nativity on 25 December. The letter therefore may be dated to mid to late January 376.⁵⁰ Here is another valuable hint about Gregory's exile from his see of Nyssa.

Every day that brings a letter from your Piety is for us a feast-day and the greatest of feast-days. And when tokens⁵¹ of the feast-day are sent in addition, what else ought we to call it but a feast-day of feast-days, the way the Old Law used to speak of a Sabbath of Sabbaths? We therefore give thanks to the Lord, having learned that you are well of body and that you have celebrated for your church now at peace the commemoration of the saving Dispensation.⁵²

Certain upheavals have disturbed us. We have not lived without sorrow because our most God-beloved brother has been forced to flee.⁵³ But do pray for him, that God may grant that he may some day behold his church healed of the wounds of the heretics' bites . . .

LETTER 237 *To EUSEBIUS BISHOP OF SAMOSATA*, EXCERPT⁵⁴

This letter was written early in 376⁵⁵ in the Spring of that year to one of Basil's closest confidants, Eusebius of Samosata.⁵⁶ Here we find the fullest account of the politics surrounding Gregory of Nyssa's exile from his see. Here is established, par excellence, the reason for Gregory's later *damnatio memoriae* of Eustathius of Sebasteia in the family history. Eustathius had become the leader of a recrudescant Homoiousian party soon identified as

⁴⁹ Mss.: V, LC, ed.: Courtonne III, 38–39, Def 3.358–363, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.272–273.

⁵⁰ Loofs, op. cit. p. 8, n. 3, Fedwick op. cit. p. 17.

⁵¹ σύμβολα, i.e. Christmas presents.

⁵² τῆς σωτήριου οἰκονομίας, i.e. the Incarnation.

⁵³ πεφυγαδευμένον εἶναι, perhaps 'living in exile/banishment'.

⁵⁴ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne III, 55–57 at 56–57, Def 3.406–411, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.279.

⁵⁵ Fedwick, op. cit., p. 17.

⁵⁶ Loofs, op. cit., p. 11.

the *Pneumatomachoi*, and now found it convenient to disown his former friends and collaborate with Valens' arianizing policies instead.

Versification is supplied here in the absence of any, except a division into two parts, in Courtonne.

... **6.** The vicar paid us a visit—the first and the greatest of our misfortunes. Whether he is really of heretical mind I am not sure—for I think he is quite ignorant of discourse⁵⁷ and has no interest or experience in such things, whereas I see him devoted to other matters night and day in soul and body—and yet he is a friend of heretics, though no more friendly to them than hostile towards us. For he assembled a synod of the impious⁵⁸ in mid-winter in Galatia,⁵⁹ and he deposed Hypsis and set up Ecdicius in his place.⁶⁰ **7.** And he ordered my brother removed on the accusation of one man, an insignificant fellow.⁶¹

8. Having then busied himself a short while with the army, again he returned to us, *breathing rage and slaughter* (Acts 9.1), and in a single pronouncement made over all the clergy of the church in Caesarea to the Senate. **9.** And he took his seat at Sebasteia for many days, making fine distinctions, giving the name of senators to those in communion with us and so condemning them to civil service, while favouring the adherents of Eustathius with the greatest honours.

10. Again, he gave orders that a synod of Galatians and Pontics be assembled at Nyssa.⁶² They obeyed, and when they met, they sent someone to the churches⁶³ of whose character I would prefer not to speak, but your Prudence is able to judge what he is likely to be who serves such policies of men.

⁵⁷ τοῦ λόγου, i.e. rhetorical training and critical reasoning whether philosophical or theological.

⁵⁸ ὁθετούντων, rejecters of the *homoousion* of Nicea, i.e. episcopal Arianizers and court toadies, *not* the followers of Marcellus of Ancyra, who were doctrinally of the opposite pole.

⁵⁹ I.e. at Ancyra.

⁶⁰ at Parnassus in the Halys valley, on the border of Galatia and Cappadocia.

⁶¹ Courtonne punctuates otherwise and translates accordingly: He ordered my brother removed by a man, and him without a name, as one accused.

⁶² I.e. the second synod to deal with Gregory, which declared him deposed and banished, and replaced him with a heretical bishop.

⁶³ Tillemont supposed this was a (heretical) bishop sent on a visitation of the churches; the Benedictine note preferred to identify him with the intruder into the see of Nyssa, on whom Basil comments in letter 239 below.

11. And even as I write these words this same band has set out for Sebasteia to join with Eustathius and overturn with him the affairs of the Nicopolitans—for the blessed Theodotus has fallen asleep. They have till now nobly and staunchly warded off the first attacks of the Vicar. For he then attempted to persuade them to accept Eustathius, and to take a bishop through him . . .

LETTER 239 *To EUSEBIUS BISHOP OF SAMOSATA*, EXCERPT⁶⁴

This letter was written in the Spring of 376⁶⁵ or mid-year.⁶⁶ Gregory of Nyssa's exile is mentioned here in a list of miserable appointments to bishoprics imposed by Demosthenes in league with Eustathius. By way of contrast to Basil's tone here, contrast Gregory Nazianzen, letter 79 *to Simplicia*, where he defends the election of a man who had been her slave as bishop, and asks her to allow this to the church.

. . . These have now driven my brother from Nyssa, and introduced instead a man, or rather half a man⁶⁷ worth only a few obols, but on a fair par with those who have put him there for the ruin of the faith. And to the town of Doara they have sent a wretched fellow, an orphan domestic⁶⁸ a runaway from his own masters. They did this thanks to the flattery practised by a godless woman who previously used to bend George to her own will and now has a hold on his successor: him they have sent to insult the pitiful name of the episcopal office . . .

⁶⁴ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne III, 59–61 at 59–60, Def 3.414–421 at 416–417, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.280.

⁶⁵ Loofs, op. cit, p. 8.

⁶⁶ Fedwick, op. cit., p. 17.

⁶⁷ ἄνδρα . . . ἀνδράποδον. The paranomasia is hard to replicate in English: the archaic 'mannikin' would be useful, someone taken captive in war and sold off as a slave, generally a 'low fellow', an urchin.

⁶⁸ Following M; the other mss. have 'a domestic (= house-slave) of orphans'.

PRELUDE 2: ST GREGORY NAZIANZEN

The letters of Gregory Nazianzen to Gregory of Nyssa are a treasure trove of biographical information on the younger Gregory's life, specially in the earlier period, from which no letters (except perhaps letter **37**) have survived. They do not duplicate any material found in St Basil, and throw much needed light on important aspects of Gregory's personal history. They show that the two were great friends and colleagues and longstanding correspondents. Alas, though Gregory Nazianzen kept some file of letters from his younger namesake, nothing has survived of Gregory of Nyssa's letters to 'the Theologian'. Letter 11 was very possibly sent from Pontus in the 360s, letters 72–76 in the late 370s during Gregory Nazianzen's long retreat at the monastery of St Thecla in Seleucia, and letters 81–197 in the 380s, when Nazianzen had settled down to a life of retirement and ill health at Arianzus.

The following selection of letters are translated from the Greek text in *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze Correspondance* ed. & tr. Paul Gallay, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003): vol. 1 *Lettres I–C*, vol. 2 *Lettres CIII–C(C)XLIX*, hereafter referred to as Gallay I and Gallay II respectively. The translations of C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow in NPNF ser. 2, vol. 7, *S. Cyril of Jerusalem*, *S. Gregory Nazianzen* have been consulted.

Manuscripts collated by Gallay, grouped in their text families, are as follows:

Family u:

- Y** Marcianus gr. 79, 11th cent. (The Library of St Mark, Venice)
- M** Mutinensis Estensis 229, 11th cent. (The Estense Library at Modena)

Family v:

- L** Laurentianus Mediceus IV–14, 10th/11th cent. (the Laurentian Library, Florence), = L in Courtonne's edition of St Basil's Letters.
- A** Londiniensis British Museum Additional 36749, 11th cent.
- C** Angelicus C 14, 11th cent. (The Angelicum Library in Rome)

Family d:**P** Parasinus gr. 506, 11th cent. (Bibliothèque National, Paris)**R** Parasinus Suppl. gr. 763, 11th cent.**Family f:****P** Patmiacus 57, 10th cent. (Monastery of St John, Patmos), = P in Courtonne's edition of St Basil's Letters.**Family g:****I** Athous Iviron 355 (now 241), 10th cent. (Monastery of Iviron, Mt Athos)**A** Athous Lavra Γ 59, 10th cent. (The Great Lavra, Mt Athos)**F** Laurentianus gr. LVII-7, 11th cent.**Family h:****B** Athous Vatopedi 114, 12th cent. (Monastery of Vatopedi, Mt Athos)**E** Marcianus gr. 81, 14th cent. (The Library of St Mark, Venice)
Citations of mss. in the notes are grouped according to their text families.LETTER 11 TO GREGORY¹

Despite some slight fluctuation in the manuscripts, both the external and internal evidence favour Gregory of Nyssa as the addressee of this letter. He is portrayed here as having been set on the path to the priesthood, and having received the minor order of reader in the liturgy and serving as an acolyte. But some time in the recent past he has quit all this to undertake a career in rhetoric instead, much to the consternation of his friends (and family) and the glee of the gossip-mongers. Gregory Nazianzen wrote him the following letter of remonstrance, attempting to recall him from the choice of a secular career back to the clerical path. It is no surprise that even as Nazianzen attempts to recall the younger Gregory from a sophistic career, he shows himself a master of Hellenist culture.

The *terminus a quo* of Gregory's decision to choose a professional career in Caesarea is January 364 when Jovian abrogated Julian's edicts against the participation of Christians in the profession of rhetoric. Gregory of Nyssa at his oldest would then have been about two years short of 30 years old, the canonical age for ordination to the presbyterate.

¹ Mss.: YM, LA, PR, Π, IF, BΞ, ed.: Gallay I, 16–18, tr. NPNF 2nd ser. 7 ('Ep. I'), 459–460.

Gregory Nazianzen probably wrote the present letter from Pontus between 363 and 365, for it is certain that he stayed during that period with Basil, Macrina, Peter and the monastic community at Annisa.

In sending this letter, the hope was no doubt that the younger Gregory would more likely listen to a friend than to his own siblings. But there is no evidence that he was won over again to service of the Church—and to resume the path to the presbyterate and the episcopacy—till some seven or eight years later, once his brother Basil had become metropolitan in Caesarea. Even then, Basil had to maintain a discreet pressure for some time, and a ‘political’ emergency provided the catalyst.

For further discussion of the background of this letter, see the section *Gregory chooses a secular career* in the Introduction.

*To Gregory*²

1. I have one good point in my nature—for even I will boast of one among the many possessed by others—I am equally displeased with myself and my friends over a bad decision. **2.** Now since all are friends and kin who live according to God and walk by the same Gospel, why should you not openly hear from us what all are saying in whispers? **3.** They do not commend your inglorious glory—to use one of your expressions³—and your decline, little by little, to the lower life, and your ambition, according to Euripides, the worst of demons.⁴

4. What has happened to you, O wisest of men, and what do you condemn in yourself that you have tossed aside the sacred and delightful books which you once used to read to the people—do not be ashamed to hear this—or have hung them up over the chimney like the rudders and hoes in winter-time,⁵ and have applied yourself to salty and bitter ones instead, preferring to be called a Rhetorician rather than a Christian? **5.** All thanks be to God that we would rather be the latter than the former.

Do not, excellent friend, do not continue on this path any longer, but though it is late, become sober again and *return to yourself* (Lk 15.17). Make your apology to the faithful and to God, and to the

² Γρηγορίῳ, Π, IF, BΞ, τῷ αὐτῷ YM, LA (i.e. Gregory of Nyssa), added in margin of A: γρ. Ἀνδρονίκῳ ἐν ἄλλῳ (written ‘to Andronicus’ in another), added in margin of PR: οὐκ πρὸς τὸν Νύσσης, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ὁμόνυμόν τινα Γρηγορίον (not to the one from Nyssa, but to another Gregory of the same name).

³ I.e. an oxymoron, one of the devices of rhetoric.

⁴ Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 531–532.

⁵ Allusion to Hesiod, *Works and Days* 629, which also appears in Letter 235.

altars and mysteries from which you have distanced yourself. **6.** And do not put me off in subtle rhetorical fashion: 'What, was I not practising as a Christian while a rhetorician, was I not a believer when engaged among the boys?' And you might perhaps call God to witness. No, dear friend, not as you ought to have been, even if I grant it to you in part.

7. What of the offence caused others by your present employment—as is to be expected with those who are always prone to see evil—and the occasion given them to suspect and to speak the worst of you?⁶ Falsely, yes, but why the necessity? For one does not live for oneself alone but also for one's neighbour: it is not enough to persuade yourself, if you do not also persuade others.

8. If you were practising boxing in public, or giving or receiving blows to the head in the shows, or writhing and twisting yourself disgracefully, would you say that you were practising wisdom of soul?⁷ The argument is not that of a wise man. It is shallow to accept it. **9.** 'If you make a change I shall rejoice even now', said one of the Pythagorean philosophers, lamenting the defection of a companion, 'but if not', he wrote, 'you are dead to me'.⁸

But for your sake, I will not say 'Being a friend, he became an enemy, though still a friend', as the Tragedy says.⁹ **10.** But I shall be saddened—to speak mildly—if you yourself neither recognize what you ought to do, which is the part of those most worthy of praise, nor follow the good counsel of others, which is the next.

11. Thus far my exhortation. Forgive me if because of my friendship for you I am distressed and I burn both on your behalf and on behalf of the whole priestly order, and I may add, of all Christians.

13. And whether I ought to pray with you or for you, may God who gives life to the dead, come to the aid of your weakness.

⁶ I.e. that Gregory has become an apostate from Christianity, an assumption all the more likely with Julian's strictures a very recent memory.

⁷ The inference is to the tricks of sophistic style which are now Gregory's pre-occupation.

⁸ The conclusion of the 3rd letter, the letters of Pythagoras' and disciples. See R. Hercher, *Epistolographi Graeci*, 603.

⁹ Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1446.

LETTER 72 TO GREGORY OF NYSSA¹⁰

This letter appears to have been written in the spring of 376, in which case it may be written during Nazianzen's retreat at the monastery of St Thecla in Seleucia of Isauria. The context seems to be Gregory of Nyssa's deposition from his see just lately, at the end of 375, in the circumstances recounted by Basil in letters **225**, **231**, **232**, **237**. Gregory of Nyssa, with his vulnerable sensibility, has written to the older Gregory, expressing his despondency at the apparent triumph of the heretics' machinations. This letter, and the following letters **73** and **74**, written to console him in answers to letters now lost, all throw some light on the younger Gregory's state at this time. Nazianzen's patient but sure expectation of a reversal of circumstances was remarkably prescient. Even before Valens' death in August 378, the exiled bishops were recalled, at which Gregory returned to his see, to the great joy of the faithful—see Gregory of Nyssa, letter **6**.

*To Gregory of Nyssa*¹¹

Do not be too distressed at your troubles. For the less we grieve over things, the less grievous they become. It is nothing strange that the heretics have thawed and are taking heart from the springtime and are creeping out of their holes, as you write. They will hiss for a little while, that I know well, and then they will hide themselves again when confronted by the truth and the times, and this all the more so the more we commit the whole affair to God.

LETTER 73 TO THE SAME¹²

For the background of this letter, see the note prefacing the preceding letter. Again this letter replies to a letter from the younger Gregory who seems to have commented on some slight or disregard shown to Gregory Nazianzen. It is curious that in this letter, as all the mss. confirm, Gregory Nazianzen uses the somewhat more formal first and second person plural throughout, unlike the preceding letter. He may be gently correcting what the younger Gregory has said about being overlooked, by communicating his own disposition. Gregory Nazianzen seems to be currently in a period of commitment to the discipline of silence, which was reflected in brevity in necessary communication.

¹⁰ Mss.: YM, LA, PR, Π, AF, BΞ, ed.: Gallay I, 91, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 7, 460.

¹¹ All mss. ascribe the Letter to Gregory of Nyssa, except BΞ, where the title *to the same* refers back to a title *to Gregory* in a preceding letter.

¹² Mss.: YM, LA, PR, Π, AF, BΞ, ed.: Gallay I, 92, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 7, 460.

To the same

Of the matters that you wrote to me, this is what we think: we are not disappointed at being overlooked, but are glad when honoured. The one is what we deserve, the other comes from your generosity. Pray for us! Excuse the fewness of words, for at any rate, if they are short, they are longer than silence.

LETTER 74 TO THE SAME¹³

On the possible background of this letter see the prefatory notes to letter **72**. If such is the case, the impression here is that Gregory of Nyssa's period of exile is nearing its end. He seems to be able to move about more freely in Cappadocia than when he first went into hiding.

But a more likely period is after Gregory of Nyssa's return to his see, when he began to assume a prominent role in Church affairs, for in this letter Nazianzen already refers to him as 'the common prop of the Church'. One such occasion might be after the burial of his sister, Macrina, when he returned to Nyssa to attend to the 'Galatian heresy' that had sprung up in his absence. The letter too shows that the two Gregorys were in constant contact by letter and that the younger Gregory used often send news to Gregory Nazianzen.

To the same

1. Though I abide here, I am abroad with you through love, for affection leads us to hold our concerns in common. Taking heart in God's love for man and in your prayers, I have great hopes that all will turn out according to your mind, and that the tempest will resolve itself into a gentle breeze, and that God will give you this reward for your orthodoxy: that you prevail over your opponents.

2. May we therefore see you soon and hear from you in person, I pray. But if you are detained by the pressure of affairs, do at any rate cheer me with a letter, and do not neglect to tell me all about your affairs and to pray for me, as you are accustomed to do. May the good God grant you health and good spirits in all circumstances—you who are the common prop of the Church.

¹³ Mss.: YM, LA, IF, ed.: Gallay I, 92–93, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 7, 460.

LETTER 76 TO GREGORY OF NYSSA¹⁴

Gregory of Nyssa wrote to Gregory Nazianzen to tell him the news of Basil's death (late September, 378). The latter may have still been at the monastery of St Thecla in Seleucia,¹⁵ or he may have already returned to Arianzus to put his affairs in order for his coming journey to Constantinople, for he assures us that such a project was not without Basil's approval, and Basil must have still been in a condition to give his opinion.¹⁶ The present letter is Gregory Nazianzen's first response to the news of Basil's death. He grieves that he is prevented by serious illness even from coming to pay honour at Basil's tomb and share in the consolation of his friends. A much longer and far more considered response to Basil's death was to come some two or three years and many tumultuous events later in the form of his *Oration 43*, his own splendid tribute to Basil's life.

To Gregory of Nyssa

1. This too was reserved for my painful life, that I should hear of the death of Basil and the departure of that holy soul who has left us to be with the Lord, for which he had been training himself his whole life long. **2.** But after all the other privations there is now this, that because of my present bodily illness of which I am still in great peril, I cannot kiss that holy dust¹⁷ or be with you to philosophise fittingly and to console our common friends.

3. But to witness the desolation of his church, shorn of such a glory and bereft of such a crown is a sight that no one—at least no one of any feeling—can bear to let his eyes look upon or lend his ear to. **4.** But I think that you, though you have many friends and receive many words of condolence, will not draw as much comfort from anyone else as from your own self and your memory of him. For you two were a pattern to all others of philosophy, a kind of spiritual standard, both of good order in prosperity and of steadfastness amid adversities, for these things two philosophy affirms: to bear success with moderation and adversity with dignity. **5.** This is what we have to say to your Excellence.

¹⁴ Mss.: YM, LA, PR, Π, IF, BΞ, ed.: Gallay I, 93–94, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 7, 460–461.

¹⁵ After a period of pastoral activity in Nazianzus from Easter 372 to 375, Gregory had retired in poor health to the monastery of St Thecla in Seleucia of Isauria.

¹⁶ *Oration 43.2*. See T. D. Barnes, 'The Collapse of the Homoeans in the East', *SP 29* (1997), 3–16 at 13.

¹⁷ As did the younger Gregory after he had buried Macrina: 'I first cast myself on the tomb and embraced the dust', *VSM 39.1* (GNO 8.1, 410, Maraval, 256).

But as for myself who write these words, what time or what words shall console me, except your company and your conversation, which the blessed one has left in place of all else, so that by discerning his character in you as in a bright and shining mirror, I might think myself to possess him still.

LETTER 81 TO GREGORY OF NYSSA¹⁸

Gallay (I, 104 n. 1) considers that Nazianzen wrote this letter to Gregory of Nyssa in 381, at the end of a long period (of some two or three years) during which the younger Gregory had been undertaking many journeys of visitation to churches as a representative of orthodoxy. One might be inclined to date it a little later, if the confirmation of his status as a living ‘canon’ of orthodoxy at the council of 381 involved him in still further journeys, such as the one to Jerusalem and Arabia (Gregory of Nyssa letters **2** and **3**).

This letter replies to a letter from the younger Gregory, who undoubtedly began his letter with a lively description of the behaviour of driftwood and then applied it to his own situation. To this Gregory Nazianzen opposes the imagery of the beneficent circuits of the sun and of the planets that though they wander do so in good order.

*To Gregory of Nyssa*¹⁹

1. You are upset at your journeyings²⁰ and you seem to yourself as unsteady as the driftwood carried along on a stream. But you must not, dear friend, continue to think like this at all. For the travels of the driftwood are will-nilly, but your journeyings are according to God and your stability is in doing good to others, though you yourself are not fixed in one place. **2.** Otherwise one might as well blame the sun for circling the world dispensing its rays and sowing life wherever it passes, or, while praising the fixed stars, scorn the planets whose very wandering has a harmony in it.

¹⁸ Mss.: YM, LA, PR, Π, AF, BΞ, ed.: Gallay I, 104, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 7, 461.

¹⁹ All mss. attest Gregory of Nyssa as the addressee, except AF: ‘to Gregory’.

²⁰ τῇ περιόδῳ, the term used for the circuits of the heavenly bodies, shortly mentioned.

LETTER 182 TO GREGORY²¹

This letter was written in 383. When Gregory retired from Constantinople to Nazianzus in 381, he agreed to temporarily administer his father's former church of Nazianzus until the episcopal vacancy was filled. His fellow bishops would have preferred to maintain this situation as the status quo, but, pressed by Gregory's importunities, they finally chose his cousin Eulalius. Gossip-mongers however, were spreading false rumours that the election had been against his wishes, with the intention of ousting him from the administration of that church. Gregory wrote the following letter to Gregory of Nyssa making plain his own dispositions in the affair, and asking him to exercise for his and Eulalius' sake his role as a pacifier of ecclesiastical dissensions.

*To Gregory*²²

1. *Alas for me that my sojourning is prolonged* (Ps 119.5), and, what is worse, that there are war and dissensions among us and that we have not protected the peace that we received from the holy fathers.

2. This I am sure that you yourself will re-establish, by the power of the Spirit who sustains you and your activities.

3. But let no one, I beg, spread lying rumours about us and our lords the bishops, as though they had proclaimed another bishop in our place against our will. **4.** But being in great need, owing to my dying health, and fearing the exigencies of a neglected church, I asked this favour of them, which was not opposed to the canons and was a relief to me, that they might give a pastor to the church. He has been granted to your prayers, a man worthy of your piety, whom I now place in your hands: I mean the most reverend Eulalius, a bishop very dear to God, in whose arms may I breathe my last.

5. But if someone thinks that it is not right while a bishop is still alive to ordain another, let him know that he will not win his case against us in this. For it is well known to all that we were assigned, not to Nazianzus, but to Sasima, although for a short time, out of reverence for our father²³ and for those who begged us, we as an outsider²⁴ undertook the presidency.

²¹ Mss.: YM, LA, PR, Π, AF, BΞ, ed.: Gallay II, 71–72, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 7, 461.

²² Γρηγορίῳ ΒΞ, Γρηγορίῳ ἐπισκόπῳ Νύσσης (to Gregory bishop of Nyssa) Π, Γρηγορίῳ ἐπισκόπῳ (to Gregory the bishop), τῷ αὐτῷ (to the same—i.e. Gregory of Nyssa) YM, LA, PR.

²³ Gregory Senior, bishop of Nazianzus, who died in 374.

²⁴ Not a 'stranger' to Nazianzus, but as a bishop ordained for another diocese.

LETTER 197 TO GREGORY, CONSOLATORY²⁵

The following letter was written to console Gregory of Nyssa on the death of Theosebia, his wife according to some commentators, his own sister and/or helpmate in the church of Nyssa according to others. From the close of the letter, it was written in Gregory Nazianzen's later years, therefore in the mid to late 380s. Daniélou would date it more precisely to 385.²⁶

J. Daniélou, in 'Le mariage de Grégoire de Nysse et la chronologie de sa vie', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 2 (1956), 71–8, argued enthusiastically that Gregory was married and that his wife was the Theosebia lamented here, and that she was only called his 'sister' metaphorically.²⁷ Today, any *a priori* assumption that a priest and even bishop could not have continued to live with a wife except in celibacy, may be anachronistic even as late as the late 4th century. Accordingly, when Nazianzen tells Gregory that he knows 'better than anyone else things both divine and human', it means that he has united the experience of married life with a commitment to service of the Church—a good point. In Daniélou's reckoning, the identity of this Theosebia's 'illustrious siblings' remains a puzzle.

But there are serious reasons against the duplication of Theosebias, i.e. one who was Gregory's wife and another his sister.

In order to assess the identity of the Theosebia in this letter, it is necessary to take into account the data of Gregory Nazianzen's *Epigram* 161 in which he describes one of Emmelia's daughters as 'yolk-fellow of a priest' (ἱερῆος σύζυγος), and *Epigram* 164 in which he says: 'And you, Theosebia, child of noble Emmelia, and in truth yoke-fellow (σύζυγε) of great Gregory,²⁸ lie here in holy soil, O support of pious women. At a seasonable age, you departed this life' (Βιότου δ' ὥριος ἐχελύθης). That one of Emmelia's daughters is specified as a *syzygos* in both epigrams is a linguistic signature allowing us to identify her as the same person. She is: 1. Theosebia, Emmelia's daughter, 2. who is the 'yolk-fellow' 3. of an eminent Gregory, 4. who is a priest, 5. is one of the illustrious siblings extolled in Gregory Nazianzen's other epigrams, 6. died at a 'seasonable' age.

²⁵ Mss.: YM, LA, PR, Π, ΙΑΒ, ΒΞ, ed.: Gallay II, 88–89, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 7, 461–462.

²⁶ J. Daniélou, 'Grégoire de Nysse à travers les *Lettres* de saint Basile et de saint Grégoire de Nazianze, *Vigiliae Christianae* 19 (1965), 31–41 at 41.

²⁷ These views were not new. Tillemont, *Mémoires* 9, Note ii, 732–733, is inclined to think Theosebia was Gregory's sister, but reports that Baronius thinks she was his wife, but is called 'sister' because they observed continence. He also mentions that Nicephorus acknowledged that Gregory had been married. The Benedictine editors, in the prefatory note to Nazianzen's Letter 197 (*PG* 37, Paris, 1862, 321–322), consider it an error to suppose that Theosebia was Gregory's *wife*. Footnote 54 reports that some have recently supposed that Theosebia was Gregory Nazianzen's wife, others want to have her joined to Gregory of Nyssa in matrimony.

²⁸ Γρηγορίου μεγάλου σύζυγε ἀτρεκέως.

Now in the present letter we find a subject who is: 1. named Theosebia, 2. is a 'yolk-fellow', 3. of an eminent Gregory, 4. who is a priest; 5. is one of illustrious siblings; 6. died at a 'seasonable' age.

When the data of the epigrams and of the present letter are collated in this way, the conclusion is patent: the two sources are dealing with the same person. That the one author, Nazianzen, should be writing of two *different* Theosebias, in identical case on so many points, is really to require too much coincidence. The Theosebia of the present letter, therefore, is Gregory's celibate, ascetic sister, who lived in close association with him at Nyssa. Living with a sister was one of the strictly limited forms of priestly cohabitation with a woman, apart from a wife, permitted by the canon law of the time; the woman had to be an immediate blood relative. Nazianzen's Epigram 154 concerns a similar case: the priest George, beside whom lies the great Basilissa, 'his sister (κασιγνήτη) in flesh and spirit, sharing his tomb as she shared his life'.

In **197.2** Theosebia is explicitly called the younger Gregory's *sister*. That this is not simply metaphorical usage is clear from the remarks in **197.5** on spiritual and bodily kinship or belonging to the same family (συγγένεια). The older Gregory is in effect saying: 'You may be able to call her "my Theosebia" because of bodily kinship, but I will also call her "my Theosebia" because of spiritual kinship, and that is the higher kinship'. The mention of her 'illustrious brothers' in both sources also tends to confirm Theosebia's identity, if among these can be reckoned Macrina, Basil, Naucratus, Gregory of Nyssa himself and Peter. Nazianzen's praise of Emmelia's fruitfulness in Epigram 162 has been cited in the introduction. His mind is further shown when he says of the parents in *Oration on Basil* 9: 'their greatest and most distinguishing feature, in my opinion, is the excellence of their children . . . That one or two should merit praise may be ascribed to nature, but eminence is found in all . . .'. It is the same author presenting the same thought in this letter. Gregory particularly notes Theosebia's timely death. She clearly died at just the 'right time', before the onset of old age. Nazianzen, who suffered so much from the diminishments of illness and age, commends this good fortune in both epigram and letter.

It is true that the term *syzygos* (lit. 'yolk-fellow', companion, associate) was commonly used, especially in the feminine form, as a synonym for 'spouse'. Yet it was also readily applied to those who share intimately in the same work, as St Paul used it in Phil 4.3. It had even been used of rivals in gladiatorial combats, scarcely an image of spouses. It is worth noting that the term used in epigram 161 for *companion*, i.e. σύζυγος, is the same used in the present letter, whereas the same epigram uses a slightly different term for 'spouse', ὁμόζυγος. While we can agree with Daniélou that Gregory was married, Theosebia was not his wife.²⁹

²⁹ For further discussion of Gregory's married state see the introduction, 'Was Gregory of Nyssa married?'

The Benedictine editors (who considered that Theosebia was Gregory's sister),³⁰ suggested she might have been a deaconess of the church of Nyssa. From the description of her in Epigram 164 as 'the support of pious women', and here as 'the confidence of women', she certainly fulfilled a ministry to women in the local church of Nyssa. It is conceivable that she was the founder and *presbytera* of the 'choir of virgins' at Nyssa, described by Gregory in **letter 6.10** and briefly alluded to in **18.5**. In that case, one could well invoke a similar situation like that of St John Chrysostom tended in Constantinople by St Olympias, head of the choir of virgins near the cathedral and his mainstay in time of great distress.

When and why did Theosebia come to Nyssa? One likely scenario is that when Gregory was first recruited by Basil as bishop for Nyssa and had gone up to Annisa to visit Macrina for the second last time, she thought of assisting her brother by sending their younger sister, a consecrated virgin trained at Annisa, to accompany him. Gregory, newly won back to service of the Church by Basil and coached in the spiritual life by Macrina, was given Theosebia as a sort of spiritual chaperone, to help him as he matured in his new vocation. So in a sense Gregory was initially under Theosebia's spiritual 'protection' (as Macrina's proxy) while she lived as a dedicated virgin under *his* episcopal protection.

*To Gregory, consolatory*³¹

1. I had set out in all haste to go to you, and had reached as far as Euphemias,³² when the festival³³ which you are celebrating there in honour of the holy martyrs checked me, both because I could not take part in it owing to my ill health, and because the untimeliness might inconvenience you. **2.** I had set out partly to visit you after so long an interval, and partly to admire the steadfastness and philosophy with which you are philosophizing—for I had heard of it—at the departure of your holy and blessed sister.³⁴ **3.** It befits the good and perfect man presented to God that you are (cf. Rom 12.1, Eph 4.13), who know better than anyone else things both divine and human, **4.** and who judge as a very light matter what to others

³⁰ PG 35, 46–54, PG 37, 322 n. 54.

³¹ Γρηγορίω παραμυθητική Π, ΒΞ παραμυθητική Γρηγορίω ΒΞ, Γρηγορίω παραμυθητική ἐπὶ γυναικί (. . . for his wife) Λ, τῷ αὐτῷ (to the same, i.e. Gregory bishop of Nyssa) ΡΡ, τῷ αὐτῷ παραμυθητική (to the same, consolatory, i.e. Gregory of Nyssa) ΥΜ, Γρηγορίω Νύσσης (to Gregory of Nyssa) Gallay.

³² μέχρις Εὐφημιάδος, 'Euphemiade' in Gallay; a place in the vicinity of Nazianzus, where Gregory's young cousin Euphemios was buried (Epigram 129).

³³ ἡ σύνοδος αὐτοῦ ἦν τελεῖτε.

³⁴ τῆς ἀγίας ἀδελφῆς ὑμῶν καὶ μακαρίας.

would be most heavy: to have lived with such a one,³⁵ and yet to have sent her on and laid her up in sure dwellings, *like a sheaf from the threshing floor garnered in due season* (Job 5.26) to use the words of the divine Scripture—she who, having partaken of the joys of this life, escaped its sorrows through the measure of her lifespan; who before she had to mourn you, was herself honoured by you with that fair funeral which is due to those like her.

5. I also, believe me, long to depart (cf. Phil 1.23), if not as you do, for that would be to say much, yet scarcely less than you. But what we must feel before that law of God prevailing from of old, which has now taken my Theosebia—for I call her mine because she lived according to God and spiritual kinship is stronger than bodily³⁶—Theosebia, the glory of the Church, the adornment of Christ, the advantage of our generation, the confidence of women;³⁷ Theosebia, the fairest and most outstanding amid such a splendour of siblings;³⁸ **6.** Theosebia, truly sacred, truly consort of a priest, and of equal honour and worthy of the great Mysteries;³⁹ Theosebia, whom the age that is to come shall receive resting on immortal pillars, that is, on the souls of all who have known her now and of all who shall know her hereafter. **7.** And do not wonder that I repeat her name again and again. For I take joy even in the memory of that blessed one. Let this, which is to say much in a few words, be her epitaph from us and my condolence for you, though you are yourself well able to console others in this way through your own philosophy in all things.

8. We are deprived of the meeting—which I greatly long for—for the reason I mentioned. But we pray with one another as long as we are upon the earth, until the common end to which we draw near no longer keeps us separated. Accordingly, we must bear all things, for we will not have long either to be pleased or afflicted.

³⁵ τὸ τοιαύτη μὲν συζῆσαι.

³⁶ κρείττων ἢ πνευματικῇ συγγένεια τῆς σωματικῆς.

³⁷ τὴν γυναικῶν παρρησίαν, *parrhesia* was a term Gregory of Nyssa particularly applied to Macrina. It means liberty, daring freedom, confidence, ease of access to majesty.

³⁸ τὴν ἐν τοσούτῳ κάλλει τῶν ἀδελφῶν εὐπρεπεστάτην καὶ διαφανεστάτην. The term ἀδελφῶν here, lit. 'brothers', is perfectly inclusive of sisters or brothers.

³⁹ τὴν ὄντως ἱερὰν καὶ ἱερέως σύζυγον καὶ ὁμότιμον καὶ τῶν μεγάλων μυστηρίων ἄξιαν. For discussion on the word σύζυγος (literally 'yolked together') see prefatory note. The 'mysteries' refers to the Christian liturgy and sacraments.

SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA: THE LETTERS

THE PASQUALI COLLECTION

LETTER 1 TO BISHOP FLAVIAN¹

Scholarly opinion on the authorship of the present letter wavered backwards and forwards through the second half of the 20th century, but is now firmly established in favour of Gregory of Nyssa as the author of this letter.

The problem is one of external evidence: letter 1 is transmitted solely among the works of Gregory Nazianzen. It is found only among the more complete mss of Gallay's first two families: u and v, towards the end among the *dubia*. But two mss of the u family, MS^{mar}, preserve a marginal scholion in a contemporary hand which notes that it is not the work of the Theologian, but of Gregory of Nyssa. This information was sufficient for the first print editors in the 16th century to publish it among the works of Gregory of Nyssa. This reassignment was not contested for four centuries. Pasquali reviewed the question in his 1925 edition and firmly maintained Gregory of Nyssa's authorship.² However in mid century the ancient attribution was revived and defended by several scholars, E. Honigmann, P. Devos, and most importantly P. Gallay, who placed the letter at the end of his critical edition of Gregory Nazianzen's letters, as letter 249.³ A few voices of protest, such as Daniélou were raised, but in general this position accepted for some years. Then in 1984, three articles appeared independently in quick succession which put the attribution to Gregory of Nyssa beyond further doubt. Both Gallay and Devos were convinced.⁴ For anyone who

¹ Mss: DABGME(+ 'S', Maraval 56); eds.: p, GNO 8.2, 1–12, Gallay, *Ep. CCXLIX*, 139–148, Maraval 106–123; tr.: NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 382–383.

² 'This Letter found its way, by an easy error, into the corpus of the letters of Gregory Nazianzen . . . I have not hesitated to publish the first letter to Flavian of Antioch, though it is transmitted among the Nazianzen codices, since it sheds so much light on the life, talent and manner of the Nyssens in the ecclesiastical history of those times, although I was not unaware that some Nazianzen codices had eluded me, among which there was perhaps one or another of better quality than those I sighted.' Pasquali, VIII.

³ *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze: Correspondence*, vol. 2, pp. 139–165.

⁴ P. Maraval, 'L'authenticité de la lettre 1 de Grégoire de Nyse', *Analecta Bollandiana* 102 (1984), 61–70; B. Wyss, 'Gregor von Nazianz oder Gregor von Nyssa?', *Mémorial André-Jean Festugière, Antiquité païenne et chrétienne* (Genève, 1984), 153–162; C. Klock, 'Überlegungen zur Authentizität des ersten Briefes Gregors von Nyssa', a paper at the 9th International Patristic Conference in Oxford, in 1983. This paragraph summarizes the material in Maraval, 53–59.

appreciates Gregory Nazianzen's 'laconism', i.e. his brevity and succinctness in the epistolary genre, the present very lengthy letter contrasts strikingly with his manner on this score alone.

The occasion that gave rise to the present letter began with a visit by Gregory to Sebasteia once his brother Peter had been installed there as metropolitan. Peter had invited him to take part in the annual celebration of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia. But this was a very special celebration, since Peter decided to use it to institute the cult of St Peter 1 of Sebasteia. On the way back home down the Halys valley, Gregory charitably broke off his journey to make a difficult detour through the mountains to visit Helladius, his brother Basil's successor in the metropolitan see of Caesarea. Helladius was visiting a village there, but so Gregory was informed, was ailing. This letter, one of the jewels of patristic personal writing, is the remarkable record of that tragi-comic visit.

In discussing the tensions between Gregory and Helladius of Caesarea, Maraval suggests⁵ that the decision of the Council and of Emperor Theodosius in 381 to entrust the charge of restoring order in Church affairs equally to a bishop (Gregory) and to his metropolitan (Helladius), already bore the seeds of future tensions. To add to that hierarchical issue were personal issues. Gregory was also the very gifted brother and doctrinal heir of Helladius' renowned predecessor in Caesarea. It would have taken a saint in Helladius' position to resist all temptation to jealousy—and it does seem he was somewhat short of a saint. On Helladius' prickly manner as metropolitan, cf. Gregory Nazianzen's letters 184 (to Amphilochius) and 183 (to Theodore). On more specific causes of tension between Helladius and Gregory, see the notes prefacing **letter 17**. The conflict between these two men was sufficiently well known in the 6th century for Severus of Antioch to use it to justify his own stance against other bishops.⁶

The mention of the council (of Constantinople) towards the end of the letter means it was not written before late 381. Helladius died in 394, probably the same year in which Gregory died, which gives us a double *terminus ante quem*. The signs in the letter of Gregory's advancing age and of Helladius' ill health might suggest a later period of Gregory's life. However, if this visit to Sebasteia was also the occasion of Gregory's *First Homily on the Forty Martyrs* (in two parts, the first preached on the day of the feast of the Martyrs, 9 March, the second part the following day), then the dating of that homily is also germane. Daniélou⁷ and Bernardi⁸ assign it to 383.

The addressee appears to be Flavian, elected Meletius' successor as bishop of Antioch during the Council in 381, despite Gregory Nazianzen's eirenic proposal that they hold off until the death of Paulinus. Flavian's election was a vote for continuing the Antiochian schism, a sorry standoff between

⁵ *Lettres*, 38–39 at 38.

⁶ See Maraval 85, n. 2.

⁷ *La chronologie des sermons*, 362–363.

⁸ *La predication des Peres Cappadociens*, 303.

parties of orthodox faith: old Nicenes and Neo-nicenes. Flavian's position in Antioch was not fully secure until 393 when his rivals, Paulinus and Evagrius, had both died and communion with Alexandria and Rome was reestablished. He died in 404.

Gregory of Nyssa of course knew Antioch very well. He had visited it often enough over the years and had important contacts there (see **letters 2, 3, 13, 14, 15, 19**, VSM 1.2, 17.1 (Maraval 136, 192), and for this reason he is on balance more likely to be writing to that city than Gregory Nazianzen. Whether Gregory also had a certain 'political' motive in choosing to write to Flavian is difficult to say. Certainly, as bishop of Antioch, a position soon reckoned as that of Patriarch, Flavian had higher ecclesiastical rank in the universal Church than the Metropolitan of Caesarea.

*To Bishop Flavian*⁹

1. Our affairs, O man of God, are not in a good way. The worsening ill will of those moved by an unjust and implacable hatred of us is no longer deduced from certain hints. It is now pursued with a boldness worthy of a good work. **2.** Meanwhile, you who have until now been removed from such spite are not concerned to put out the devouring conflagration on your neighbour's land. It is as if you did not know that they are well advised for their own interests who strive to extinguish the fire on their neighbours' land. Through such help given to a neighbour they ensure that they will not be without help in similar circumstances.

3. What then, do I mean?¹⁰ Sanctity has quit this life; truth has fled from us. As for peace, we once at least bandied the word about on our lips, but now, not only does it not exist, not even the word for it left to us. But that you may understand more clearly what has stirred our indignation, I will briefly set out for you the tragedy.

4. Certain persons informed us that the most reverend Helladius was ill disposed towards us, and was holding forth to all that I was

⁹ *φλαβιανῷ ἐπισκόπῳ* BGMD a marginal note in the same hand as in MS: *αὕτη ἡ ἐπιστολὴ γρηγορίου ἐστὶ τοῦ νόσης, οὐχὶ τοῦ Θεολόγου* ('this letter is by Gregory of Nyssa, not the Theologian'), *τῷ αὐτῷ* ('to the same') *Α* (preceding it is Gregory Nazianzen's Letter 64 'to Flavian the bishop'), *φλαβιανῷ* E.

¹⁰ This type of question, marking the transition from a vivid opening image (in this case that of putting out fires) to its interpretation, is a trademark of Gregory of Nyssa's style, what Maraval rightly calls 'un véritable tic de langage'. It occurs in letters 4.2, 9.2, 11.3, 12.2, 14.2, 19.3, 20.4, 21.2, 28.2, and frequently in other works. Letters 8, 10, 13 and 16 follow the general pattern without couching the transitional sentence as a question.

the cause of his worst troubles. At first I did not believe what they said, consulting only myself and the truth of the matter. But when reports in the same vein reached us from all sides and events concurred with the reports, I thought it fitting not to overlook this ill will, as yet untreated and still without root and development. **5a.** I therefore wrote by letter to your piety, and to many others who might in some way help me in my purpose, and urged your zeal in this matter.

5b. As things turned out, I had celebrated with the Sebasteians the first commemoration of the most blessed Peter,¹¹ and the usual commemorations they celebrated at the same time among them for the 40¹² holy martyrs who had dwelt there. I was on my way back to my own church, **6.** when someone informed me that Helladius himself was staying in the mountain district,¹³ celebrating the commemorations of the martyrs. At first I continued my journey, deeming it more appropriate that a meeting should take place in the metropolis itself. But when one of his friends went to some trouble to meet me and assured me that he was sick, I left my carriage¹⁴ at the spot where this news overtook me. I covered the remaining distance on horseback, teetering on the brink of very rough ascents

¹¹ Who is this Peter? Gregory's own brother, or Peter of Alexandria, have been proposed. But thanks to P. Devos, 'Saint Pierre 1^{er}, évêque de Sébastée, dans une lettre de Grégoire de Nazianze', *Analecta Bollandiana* 79 (1961), 346–360, it is clear that Gregory refers to the Peter who was bishop of Sebasteia earlier in the 4th century at the time of the martyrs and who retrieved their relics from the river (*Passio XL Martyrum* 13, O. von Gebhardt (ed.), *Acta martyrum selecta: Ausgewählte Märtyreracten und andere Urkunden aus der Verfolgungszeit der christlichen Kirche* (Berlin: 1903), 171–181).

Maraval 86–87 n. 2, suggests that a reason for the slowness of establishing the cult of St Peter I of Sebasteia is that originally he was buried in another town. And it is surely no accident that this celebration is inaugurated under another Bishop Peter, Gregory's own brother. If Peter is relatively new as the bishop of Sebasteia, then he seems to be consolidating his position by inviting his famous brother Gregory, once elected as bishop of Sebasteia in doctrinally unhappier times (letter 19.14–18) and now promoted by the Emperor himself, to preach at the festival of the Forty Martyrs, with whom Peter and Gregory's family long had fervently felt connections. Emmelia their mother had acquired an urn of the martyr's ashes and installed them in a martyrion in the estate at Annisa. Basil Senior, Emmelia, and Macrina the Younger were all buried there.

¹² Added with Jaeger's shrewd conjecture: <μ> μαρτυρῶν (μ' = '40').

¹³ Cf. Basil, Letter 283, Def 4.171.

¹⁴ Gregory often travelled in a carriage, probably the four-wheeled *raeda* drawn by mules. See letters 2.13, 6.3, 8, 9,

that were little short of impassable. **7.** Fifteen milestones measured the intervening distance, as we heard from the local people. Barely making headway, now on foot, now on horseback, in the early morning—for I had even employed part of the night—I arrived in the first hour of the day at Andaëmona,¹⁵ for that was the name of the place where he was holding church with two other bishops.

8. At a distance, from a height¹⁶ overlooking the village, we gazed down on this open-air assembly¹⁷ of the church. Step by step, leading the horses by hand, I and my company made our way on foot over the intervening ground. We arrived in time for two things to take place simultaneously: he retired from the church to the house¹⁸ even as we approached the *martyrion*. **9.** Without delay we sent a messenger to inform him of our coming. After a little while, the deacon who attended him came to meet us. We asked him to be quick and inform Helladius so that we might spend as much time as possible with him and take the opportunity of leaving nothing between us without a cure.

10. Whereupon I sat down in the open air, waiting for the invitation to enter, becoming, during this untimely interlude, a spectacle to all who were visiting the synod. The time wore on. Drowsiness stole over us, and weariness (cf. Ps 118.28), a weariness intensified by the fatigue of the journey and the heat of the day and those who were gawking at us and gesticulating at us to others with their fingers. I found all these things so oppressive that the words of the prophet came true in me: *My spirit within me grew faint* (Ps 143.4).

11. And so I endured until the hour had already advanced to noon. I was greatly repenting of the visit, the more so since I had brought the occasion of this discourtesy upon myself—indeed my own reasoning bore down on me more than the insult done me by

¹⁵ Ἀνδαημονοῖς DBG γρ margin of M; Ἀνδαμουκηνοῖς M; Ἀνδουμοκηνοῖς E; Ἀνδαμουκινοῖς A. The locality is unknown. Gregory was travelling on the Sebasteia-Caesarea road south of the Halys. The fact that Helladius is ‘holding church’ there places it within his province. Andaëmona is probably nearer to Caesarea, since Gregory speaks of waiting to see Helladius in the metropolis.

¹⁶ Ἀποθεν δὲ κατιδόντες ἔξ αὐχένος τινὸς ὑπερκειμένου τῆς κόμης. The term αὐχὴν appears also in Basil Letter 14, referring to some kind of a rise or height behind his hermitage. It is not recorded in either LSJ or Lampe.

¹⁷ As Maraval points out (89, n. 3), because the martyrion was a small building major celebrations would have had to have been conducted outside.

¹⁸ Helladius has possibly just concluded an all-night vigil.

my enemies, warring as it did against itself, and changing into a regret that I had undertaken the venture.

12. But at last the temple was opened to us and we were admitted to the inner shrine, the rabble,¹⁹ meanwhile, remaining excluded at the entrance, though my deacon entered with me, supporting with his arm my body worn out from the fatigue. So I greeted him, and stood for a moment, waiting to be invited to a chair. Nothing of the sort was forthcoming, so I turned aside to one of the outer benches and rested myself, still waiting on something kindly to be said to us, or at least some welcoming gesture towards us to appear with a look. But everything turned out against this hope. A silence ensued as during the night, and a tragic gloom, and a daze, and a terror, and utter speechlessness.²⁰ For no short while the time dragged as it does in the hush of the dead of night.

13. I was struck by the notion of it all: he did not even deign to extend to me a common greeting, one of those courtesies with which meetings are conducted, such as 'welcome', or 'where have you come from?' or 'on whose behalf have you come?'—so natural—or 'what is your purpose in coming here?' I was beginning to regard this quiet as an image of the life led in Hades. **14.** Yet I condemn the similitude as falling short. For in Hades there is a great steadiness of condition: none of the things that work the tragedy of life on earth disturb that existence. *Their glory*, as the Prophet says,²¹ *does not follow men below* (Ps 48.18). Instead, each soul, having quit the things pursued by the many here, I mean the *hubris*, the inflation and the conceit, enters that realm below stripped and unencumbered, so that none of the vicissitudes here are found among them. **15.** Even so my condition at the time appeared to me like that of Hades, or a lightless dungeon, or a dismal torture-chamber, when I reflected on the great examples of nobility we inherited from our fathers²² and what account of them we shall leave to those who come after us. **16.** Why, indeed, do I mention that affectionate disposition of our

¹⁹ The tone is strongly ironical.

²⁰ The terms used here mimic Euripides' parody of Aeschylus' tragic manner as portrayed in Aristophanes' comedy, *The Frogs*.

²¹ This manner of indicating a scriptural citation is never found in Gregory Nazianzen.

²² In the context of relations between bishops, by 'fathers' Gregory may mean the Apostles, or earlier generations of bishops.

fathers for each other? For it is no marvel that human beings, being all of equal honour by nature, wished for no advantage over one another, but sought only to surpass each other in humility.

But the thought that especially filled my mind was that the Master of all creation,²³ *the only-begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father* (Jn 1.18), who *was in the beginning* (Jn 1.1–2), who *was in the form of God* (Phil 2.6), who *upholds all things by the word of His power* (Heb 1.3), not only *humbled himself* (cf. Phil 2.8) in this, that he dwelt among men in the flesh (cf. Jn 1.14), but that he even welcomed Judas His own betrayer as he approached to kiss him with his own lips (cf. Lk 22.47–48), and that when He had entered into the house of Simon the leper he reproached him for not welcoming him with a kiss (cf. Lk 7.44–45). But I was not reckoned an equal even of that leper! **17.** And yet what was I, and what was he? I cannot discover the difference between us. For if one were to look to the things of this world, from what height did he descend, where was the dust in which I lay? If indeed, one were to examine the things of the flesh, it will perhaps be no offence to say this,²⁴ that we were about on a par, whether concerning nobility or free-birth²⁵—**18.** although, if one were to enquire into the true freedom and nobility, that is, of the soul, each of us is equally *a slave of sin* (Jn 8.34, Rom 6.17) and each equally in need of the one who takes away his sins (cf. Jn 1.29, 1 Jn 3.5). It was another who ransomed us by his own blood from death and from sins (1 Pet 1.18–19), who redeemed us (cf. Gal 4.5) and yet showed no haughtiness against those whom He redeemed, who *calls the dead to life* (Rom 4.17) and *heals every infirmity* (Ps 102.3) of their souls and bodies.

19. Since the pomposity of this conceit and self-importance against us was such that almost the height of heaven was too limiting for it—though I could not perceive any matter or motive for this disease that might make such a passion excusable in the case of some who in certain circumstances contract the disease, as when family or education or pre-eminent dignity inflate those of shallower

²³ Maraval gives the reference for this phrase as III Macc. 2.2.

²⁴ Gregory seems to be discreetly generous to Helladius' social and cultural status in comparison with his own. This overstatement will be understood by Flavian and lend persuasion to his comparison.

²⁵ See Macrina's account of their family's high standing, VSM 23.2 (GNO 8.1.393–395, Maraval 208–212).

dispositions²⁶—I was at a loss how to advise myself to keep calm. For my heart within me was swelling with anger at the absurdity of such conduct and was thrusting aside all reasons for patience. **20.** It was especially then that I loved the divine Apostle who so vividly depicts the civil war within us, where he says there is a certain *law of sin in the members, warring against the law of the mind* which often makes the mind both *captive* and subject to itself (cf. Rom 7.23). This is what I saw in myself, the battle-line of two reasonings, one ranged against the other: the one for crushing such *hubris* and inflation, the other for calming the swelling anger.

21. When by God's grace the better impulse prevailed,²⁷ I then said to him, 'Perhaps there is some treatment you need for the body that is hindered by our presence, and it is time that we withdrew?'

22. He pronounced that he had no need of treatment for the body. At that I spoke to him some words meant to cure, the situation being what it was. He then stated in few words that his grievance against us was due to the many injuries I had done him. I for my part answered him in this fashion: 'Among human beings, lies have great power to deceive, but the divine tribunal does not admit the false reasonings that arise from deceit. In my relations with yourself, my conscience is sufficiently confident to pray that I may find forgiveness for all my other sins, but if I have acted in any way against you, that this remain forever unforgiven.' **23.** But at this speech he only hardened all the more, and would not allow me to continue with any proofs of what I had said.

24. It was now long past the sixth hour, and the bath was well primed, and the banquet was in preparation, and the day was the Sabbath, and a celebration of the martyrs.²⁸ Again how the disciple of the Gospel imitates the Master in the Gospel! When eating and

²⁶ The redundancy of the syntax here was a fault to which Gregory of Nyssa, but not Gregory Nazianzen was liable.

²⁷ ἐπεκράτησεν ἡ κρείττων ῥοπή (lit. 'the stronger impulse prevailed'), taking κρείττων as somewhat altering its meaning to 'better'; Gregory seems to use it in this sense later in the letter; a verb with prefix is also more characteristic of his vocabulary. p has οὐκ ἐκράτησεν ἡ χείρων ῥοπή ('the worse impulse did not prevail'), which Pasquali thinks is perhaps correct.

²⁸ Maraval remarks (99, nn. 2, 3) that celebrations of the martyrs were often followed by a festive meal more or less in common, sometimes furnished by benefactors. The bath before dinner at noon was a practice known in the Greco-Roman world.

drinking with tax-collectors and sinners, his defence against those who reproached him was that he did these things through love for man (cf. Mt 9.10–12 et al.). This disciple on the other hand considers our fellowship at table a kind of curse and defilement. **25.** After all the hardship we had sustained on the path to the place, after the great heat in which we had baked as we sat by his gates in the open air, after all the sullen gloom we endured when we had come before his eyes, he sends us off again to toil painfully in a body already failing and utterly exhausted, over the same distance along the same road. Thus we scarcely reached our company by sunset, after suffering many mishaps on the way. For a storm-cloud which had gathered into a mass in the clear air by the gusting of the wind, drenched us to the skin with a shower from its floods, for with the excessive heat, we were not equipped with any protection against rain. **26.** Saved, however, by God's grace as from a flood or a shipwreck, we were well pleased to reach our company. After resting with the others that night, we at last arrived in our regions safe and alive, with this superadded to the meeting, that the memory of all that had happened beforehand was freshened by this latter insult done to us.²⁹

27. Henceforth we must in some way take counsel on our own behalf, or rather on his behalf. It was because his conduct was not checked on earlier occasions that it has led him to such immoderate conceit. In order that he might improve on himself, it is perhaps fitting that something be done by us, that he might learn that he is a human being and has no authority to disdain and dishonour those of the same mind and the same rank. **28.** For consider: grant that it is true—I am speaking hypothetically—that I have done something to cause him grievance. What investigation was undertaken in our regard to judge between facts and suspicions? What proof was given of the alleged injury? What canons were cited against us? What legitimate episcopal decision confirmed the judgment against us? **29.** And even if any of these had taken place legitimately, my standing³⁰ might certainly have been at risk, but what kind of canons sanction *hubris* against a free-born person and dishonour against one of equal rank?

²⁹ 1.26 is a whole sentence in Greek; its somewhat awkward, pleonastic clauses are a stylistic fault to which Gregory of Nyssa, but not Nazianzen, was liable.

³⁰ I.e. in the Church.

30. You who look to God, *judge a righteous judgment* (Jn 7.24, Zech 7.9). On what grounds do you deem excusable this dishonour against us? **31.** If our dignity is to be judged according to priesthood,³¹ the privilege accorded either of us by the Council³² is one and the same—or rather, the responsibility for common correction, in this we possess the same.³³ **32.** But were some to regard either of us in ourselves, apart from any priestly dignity, what does one have more than the other? Family? Education? Free-birth among the noblest and most renowned? Knowledge? These things will be found either equal, or at least not inferior, in us.³⁴ **33.** ‘But what about revenue?’ he will say.³⁵ May it not be necessary for me to enter upon discussion of these matters in his regard;³⁶ this much only it will suffice to say, that our own was so much at the beginning, and is so much now. I leave it to others to enquire into the reasons for this increase of our revenue up to the present, nursed and growing almost daily by means of worthy undertakings.

34. What, therefore, is the authority for this insolence against us, if he has neither superiority of birth, nor illustrious dignity, nor a commanding power of speech, nor any previous benefaction? **35.** Yet even if these things were so, the insolence against the free-born would still be inexcusable. Since not one of these things are so, I judge it right not to leave so great a disease of conceit in an untreated state. The cure is to diminish the inflation and reduce the hollow

³¹ τὴν ἱερόσυνην. This word only began to become current for the Christian priesthood, especially the episcopate, at this period. See also 17.23. Gregory, with John Chrysostom is one of the first witnesses of this usage.

³² The Council of Constantinople in 381.

³³ On 30 July 381 Emperor Theodosius confirmed a decision of the council, naming Gregory, Helladius of Caesarius and Otreius of Melitene as the guarantors of orthodoxy and joint overseers of church affairs in the civil diocese of Pontica (cf. *Cod. Theod.* 26.1.3, Sozomen 7.9). As both Pasquali and Maraval remark, such a decision could not but be prejudicial to hierarchical order. Gregory does not mention here that Helladius was his metropolitan. The metropolitanate had much more weight then, and still has in the Christian East, than it has had for some centuries in the Western Church.

³⁴ By his discreet understatement Gregory is indicating the opposite: such advantages are his.

³⁵ The reference seems to be to diocesan revenue. In the mid 370s, Gregory had been deposed by the Vicar of Pontus on an unproven charge of mismanagement of funds.

³⁶ Gregory hints that there is something less than worthy in Helladius’ financial dealings; it seems he darkly hints at the sin of simony.

pomposity, by deflating a little of the conceit with which he is swelling. But how this may be of effected is God's concern.

LETTER 2 TO KENSITOR ON PILGRIMAGES³⁷

The addressee of this letter is otherwise unknown. A *censitor* was properly a provincial officer in charge of taxation. Basil's Letter 284 is addressed to a *censitor* concerning the taxation of monks. But Pasquali shows (XXXII) that in the ancient world it was by no means unusual to find titles of public office, such as *Censor*, also used as proper names. He considers that the Κηνσίτορ here is more likely a superior of a monastery than a civil magistrate, given the spiritual rather than fiscal preoccupations of the letter (2.18: 'urge the brothers . . .'). The letter is much concerned with the advisability of travel for monks in general and for consecrated women in particular. Hence it is virtually certain that Kensitor's monastery included women ascetics, in the arrangement assumed in Basil's Asketikon and exemplified at Annisa under Macrina. The context seems to be that Kensitor, who has women ascetics under his overall supervision (though they would also have had their own female superior), has written to Gregory seeking his counsel as to what to do about the women in his community who seek leave to go on pilgrimage, on the grounds of a pious vow. Here Gregory argues that even if some advantage might be construed for going on pilgrimage to Jerusalem (and he doubts it), the practice is pointless for those who have espoused the 'perfect' life, i.e., monks generally, and in this case, consecrated women in particular. They have given themselves over to an *interior* progress in the life in Christ of which outward peregrinations to the holy places at best serve as a metaphor.

The data of 2.11–15 and the succeeding letter indicate that both were written after Gregory had returned from his journey to Jerusalem and Arabia, which followed on the commission given him at the council of Constantinople in 381.

The present letter became the subject of heated controversy between Protestants and Catholics in the 17th century.³⁸ Pierre du Moulin, a Calvinist clergyman, launched the polemics in his notes to the edition of 1605 and in his accompanying tracts against altars and sacrifices. He wished to flourish Gregory as a Church Father who condemned the pilgrimages to holy places

³⁷ Mss.: OTCHKMXΠΦ; ed.: GNO 8.2, 13–19, Maraval 106–123; tr.: Letter 18, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 545–548. Maraval carried out a further collation of mss (60–68), including some late mss. dismissed by or unknown to Pasquali, and a newly discovered mss. *Cod. Marc. 7.38*, which confirmed some of Pasquali's emendations and allowed Maraval to refine some nuances.

³⁸ See Maraval, 'Une controverse sur les pèlerinages autour d'un texte patristique', *RHPR* 66 (1986), 131–146.

so favoured by Catholics. The book was reprinted at Hanover in 1607, whereupon Jacob Gretscher S.J. answered du Moulin in a small book published at Ingolstadt, Sweden, in 1608. Such was the controversy stirred up that the royal printer Morell, on Fronto Ducaeus' advice, omitted this letter altogether from his 1615 edition. Gretscher, however, prepared the letter with his own notes as an appendix to the edition in 1618. Like Bellarmine, he found it hard to credit Gregory's authorship. Anyway, he argued, the author was not so much militating against pilgrimages themselves, as expressing his concern over the moral safety of consecrated virgins on such ventures—which latter consideration, Pasquali says, was not far from Gregory's purpose. Catholic acceptance of Gregory's authorship settled down through the later 17th and the 18th centuries once Tillemont and Baronius came out in its favour. See Pasquali LXXXIII–LXXXIV.

It is important to note that the dim view of pilgrimages Gregory expresses here is not unique among the Church Fathers. What was supposed to be a means of fostering devotion was quite capable of becoming a hindrance to it instead. Thus a vein of spiritualizing caution against exaggerated esteem for the practice can be traced in the doctrine of the Fathers, Doctors and writers across the centuries. Even from the earliest times the Fathers warned that such devotions were liable to degenerate into an abuse. John Chrysostom, otherwise so keen in his praise of pilgrimages, found it necessary to explain that there was 'no need for anyone to cross the seas or venture upon a long journey. Let each of us at home invoke God earnestly and He will hear our prayer' (*Ad pop. Antioch*, *hom.* 3.2.49; cf. *hom.* 4.6.68). Jerome writes to Paulinus (Ep. 58.2–6) to explain, in an echo of Cicero's phrase, that it is not the fact of living in Jerusalem, but of living there *well*, that is worthy of praise. He speaks of the countless saints who never set foot in the Holy Land, and dares not tie down Him whom Heaven itself cannot contain to one small portion of the Earth. He ends with a justly famous sentence: 'It is just as easy to reach the portals of Heaven from Britain as from Jerusalem'. Another well-quoted passage is from St. Augustine in which he explains that 'It is not by journeying but by loving that we draw near to God. We approach Him who is everywhere present and present wholly, not by our feet but by our hearts' (Ep. 155.672). Four centuries later, St Boniface was caustic in his criticism of pilgrimages to Rome, noting that despite synodical and royal prohibitions many of the women making such journeys lost their virtue.³⁹

But it is a question not just of the abuse of pilgrimages, but whether they have any value at all to a serious life in Christ that Gregory targets here. This has particular reference to those dedicated to God in the monas-

³⁹ These examples are drawn from the article 'Pilgrimages' by Bede Jarret in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, volume 12 (1912), and from the article 'Pilgrimages, Roman' by F. X. Murphy *New Catholic Encyclopedia* volume 11 (2003), 351–354 at 354. See also H. Leclercq, 'Pèlerinages', *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. Cabrol, H. Leclercq and H. I. Marrou (Paris, Letouzey et Ané, 1907–1953), 14.1:40–55.

tic life. What might be tolerable or understandable in one sector of Christians is strongly contraindicated in another. This ambivalence can be seen in Basil's attitude to attendance at the 'synods' connected with the celebrations of the martyrs. Basil as father of monks strongly warns ascetics from attending such affairs which all too often degenerated into unscrupulous commercial dealing, revelry and licentiousness.⁴⁰ Yet Basil as bishop is constrained to use these synods as means of rallying the common populace.⁴¹ Gregory's argument here that pilgrimages are of no spiritual advantage whatever to monks and nuns segues into a *topos* of monastic literature: the importance of stability for spiritual progress and the necessity of resisting the temptation to wander abroad.⁴² 'Stay in your cell and it will teach you all things'.⁴³

*To Kensitor, on those who make pilgrimages to Jerusalem*⁴⁴

1. Since you have sent me queries by means of a letter, my friend, I have thought it is proper to answer all your points in due order (cf. Lk 1.3).

I maintain that those who have dedicated themselves once for all to the sublime way of life⁴⁵ do well always to look to the sayings of the gospel, and, just as those who direct a proposed task by a rule, and by means of the straightness of that rule return what is crooked in their hands to the straight, so we deem it fitting that they should apply some such correct and unbent rule—I mean, of course, the gospel way of life—and direct themselves toward God in accordance with it.

⁴⁰ See *Longer Response* 40 and note, *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great*, pp. 250–251.

⁴¹ See his homilies at the *martyria* of local saints outside Caesarea: St Gordius: *Homily* 18 (PG 31 489–508), St Mamas: *Homily* 23 (PG 31 589–618). In *Letters* 100 (Def 2.182–187), 142 (Def 2.344–345), 176 (Def 2.458–461) and 252 (Def 4.18–21) he invites other bishops to the annual Caesarean synod at the commemoration of Sts Euphychius and Damas.

⁴² See for example, Cassian's *Conferences* 6.15: 'Therefore one must abide constantly in one's cell. For as often as a person has wandered out of it and has returned to it like a novice who is only beginning to live there, he will waver and be disturbed. The person who stays in his cell has acquired an intensity of mind that, once allowed to slacken, he will not be able to recover again without effort and pain', B. Ramsey (tr. and annot.), *John Cassian: The Conferences* (New York: Newman Press, 1997), p. 233. The idea that mobility was a hindrance to the development of a contemplative spirit was a Stoic one, note, p. 240.

⁴³ A famous monastic tag repeated in various ways from Abba Moses in the *Sayings of the Fathers* to St Symeon the New Theologian.

⁴⁴ περὶ τῶν ἀπιόντων εἰς ἱεροσόλυμα κηνσιτορι, Φ. This Letter has also been ascribed to GNaz: 'Letter of the Theologian to Gregory of Nyssa among the saints, concerning etc.' vt.

⁴⁵ τῇ ὑψηλῇ πολιτείᾳ.

2. Now some of those who have undertaken the solitary and retired life⁴⁶ have made it a law of their piety to see the places in Jerusalem where the tokens of the Lord's sojourn in the flesh may be seen. It would be well, then, to look to the rule, and, if the guidance of the commandments intends such things, to fulfil the task as a charge from the Lord. But if it is outside the commandments of the Master, I do not know what the fulfilment of such a prescription means to someone who has become a law to himself⁴⁷ of the good. **3.** When the Lord invites the blessed to their inheritance in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 25.34–36), journeying to Jerusalem is not listed among their good deeds. When he proclaims the blessed life (cf. Mt 5.3–12, Lk 6.20–22) he does not include any such object of zeal. *Let anyone who has understanding* (Rev 13.18) ask himself why a practice that neither renders us blessed nor directs us to the Kingdom should be made an object of our zeal? **4.** Even if there were profit in the venture, nevertheless the perfect would do well not to pursue it. But when we learn from an accurate observation of the practice that it also imposes a harmful worldly preoccupation⁴⁸ on those who have undertaken to lead the strict life, it is worthy not so much of a blessed zeal, as of the greatest vigilance if one who has chosen to live according to God is not to be infiltrated by any of its harmful effects (cf. 1 Tim 6.18).

5. Where then, is the harm in these things? The sober way of life⁴⁹ is open to all, both men and women. A mark of the philosophic life is propriety.⁵⁰ But this is accomplished by an unmixed and separate life,⁵¹ in which nature is not mixed up and confused. Neither are women bolting for the safeguards of propriety among

⁴⁶ τῶν τὸν μονήρη καὶ ἰδιάζοντα βίον ἐπανηρημένων. Gregory uses ἰδιάζοντα generically to mean 'celibate', whereas Basil uses it pejoratively (= 'individualist'), being very concerned about the individualism of freelance ascetics. The remedy, according to Basil, was to come together in properly constituted cenobitic communities. He argues the case in Longer Responses 7.

⁴⁷ ἑαυτῷ. Cod. Marc. 7.38 confirms Pasquali's emendation.

⁴⁸ ψυχικὴν (material-minded) προστρίβεσθαι βλάβην, the harm that consists in worldliness.

⁴⁹ ἡ σεμνὴ (serious, dignified, solemn, sacred, monastic) πολιτεία.

⁵⁰ εὐσχημοσύνη, seemliness, gracefulness, elegance, dignity, decency, decorum.

⁵¹ ὡς ἀνεπίμικτον καὶ ἀσύγχυτον εἶναι τὴν φύσιν. Gregory recapitulates a principle of Basil's monastic reform: there is not to be the indiscriminate mixing of the sexes that was a feature of some ascetic enthusiasts and had been condemned at the Council of Gangra in 341.

men, nor men among women. **6.** But the necessities of a journey constantly break down⁵² exactitude in these matters and foster indifference to safeguards. For it is impracticable for a woman to pursue so long a journey unless she has a conductor, for on account of her natural weakness⁵³ she has to be put on her horse and be lifted down again, and she has to be steadied in rough terrain.⁵⁴ Whichever we suppose, that she has someone known to her to fulfil this service or a hired attendant—in either case such conduct cannot avoid blame. Whether she leans on a stranger or on her own servant, she fails to observe the law of modesty. **7.** Moreover, as the inns and caravanserais and cities in the east⁵⁵ are so free and indifferent towards vice, how will it be possible for one passing through such fumes to escape without smarting eyes? Where the ear is contaminated and the eye is contaminated, how is the heart not also contaminated by the unsavoury impressions received through eye⁵⁶ and ear? How will it be possible to pass through such places of contagion without contracting infection?

8. Moreover, what gain shall he have when he has reached those places? Is it that the Lord still lives in the body today in those places and has stayed away from our regions? Or is it that the Holy Spirit abounds among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but is unable to come to us? **9.** Really, if it is possible to infer God's presence from the things that appear, one might more justly consider that he dwelt in the nation of the Cappadocians than in places elsewhere! For how many altars are there in these places⁵⁷ through which the name of the Lord is glorified? One could scarcely count so many altars in

⁵² παραθράνει, Cod. Marc. 7.38, absent in other mss.

⁵³ Such conceptions of feminine 'weakness' are linked to the perceived *mores* of social class. John Chrysostom, preaching as a deacon in Antioch at this time (380s), takes a dim view of the sequestered and languorous lifestyle of upper class young women. He praises Rachel (*Hom. on what kind of woman to choose as a wife* (PG 51, 225–242 at 234D and 236B) for showing physical vigour and alacrity in service, together with modesty, unaccompanied in the marketplace.

⁵⁴ δυσχωρίαις, Cod. Marc. 7.38, a more precise word than the δυσχερίαις of other mss.

⁵⁵ I.e. the Roman diocese of *Oriens*, covering Syria, Palestine and the Arabian hinterland. The unsavoury reputation of inns and taverns was proverbial in the ancient world. Cf. Basil's remarks on those who loiter in taverns and commit indecencies in *Longer Responses* 22 and Gregory Nazianzen in letter 2 to Basil where he deplores the 'hucksters, and the rest of the crop of nuisances which infest cities'.

⁵⁶ ὀφθαλμοῦ, Cod. Marc. 7.38, ὀφθαλμῶν in other mss.

⁵⁷ τούτοις, i.e. Gregory is writing in Cappadocia, perhaps to one also in Cappadocia.

all the rest of the world! **10.** Again, if grace were greater in the vicinity of Jerusalem than anywhere else, sin would not be so entrenched among those who dwell there. But as it is, there is no form of uncleanness that is not brazened among them: *fornications*,⁵⁸ *adulteries*, *thefts* (cf. Mt 15.19), *idolatries*, *drugs*,⁵⁹ *envies* (cf. Gal 5.20–21), *murders*. This last kind of evil especially is so entrenched that nowhere else are people so ready to murder each other as in those places, where even blood relatives attack each other like wild beasts for the sake of lifeless profit (cf. Tit 1.11). Well then, where such things go on, what evidence is there that in those places grace abounds more?

11. But I know the retort that many make to what I have said. They will say, ‘Why did you not lay down this law for yourself as well? If there is no gain to the pilgrim according to God for having gone there, why did you undertake such a vain journey yourself?’

12. Let them therefore hear my defence in this matter. Through that necessity in which I was appointed to live by him who disposes our life, I received a charge from the holy council⁶⁰ to go to those regions in order to undertake the correction of the church in Arabia. Since Arabia borders on the region of Jerusalem, I promised that I would visit those who preside⁶¹ over the holy churches of Jerusalem, because their affairs were in turmoil and in need of a mediator. **13.** Then the most pious emperor⁶² provided for the easing of my journey by means of public carriage,⁶³ so that we did not have to endure

⁵⁸ πορνείαι with ΚΠ, corroborated by πορνεία in Cod. Marc. 7.38; πονηρίαι (evil deeds) in all other codices.

⁵⁹ φαρμακείαι. Drugs were used, often along with magical practices, for such purposes as procuring abortion and sterility. The list of vices here may be compared with Mt 15.19, Mk 7.22, Gal 5.19–21, Rev 9.21, 21.8.

⁶⁰ The Council of Constantinople in 381 is meant.

⁶¹ Gregory is being purposefully vague in his terminology. The fact that he does not name the bishop, Cyril, indicates tension between the bishop and his clergy and between Cyril and himself. Maraval discusses the possible issues, p. 35.

⁶² Theodosius I. He did not even enter Constantinople for the first time until November 380. His position as an emperor who sponsored orthodoxy scarcely had any role to play in the Council of Antioch (379). This detail concerning the Emperor more than anything else indicates that by ‘holy council’ Gregory means the council of 381.

⁶³ During preparations for the Nicene council in 325 the Emperor Constantine extended the use of public conveyance to Christian bishops. See Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* 3.6, Theodoret, *Church History* 1.6. Constantine had already employed this expedient. In a letter to the Bishop of Syracuse he charges him to use a public vehicle (δημόσιον ὄχημα) on the way to the Council of Arles in 314, Eusebius *HE* 10.6.23. Thereafter bishops frequently availed themselves of this imperial conces-

any of those necessities which we have remarked in the case of others. In fact our carriage was as good as a church or monastery, and we sang psalms and fasted in the Lord throughout the whole journey. **14.** Therefore do not let our own case be a stumbling block to anyone. On the contrary, let our counsel be all the more persuasive, because we counsel you on matters which we have ascertained with our own two eyes.

15. For we confessed that the Christ who was made manifest is true God both before we arrived in the place and afterwards. Our faith was neither diminished nor increased. We knew that he was made man through the Virgin—before we saw Bethlehem; we believed in his resurrection from the dead—before we saw his memorial-rock; we confessed the truth of his ascension into heaven—without having seen the Mount of Olives. We benefited only this much from our travelling there, that we came to know by comparison that our own places are far holier than those abroad.

16. Accordingly, *all you who fear the Lord, praise him* (Ps 21.23) in the places where you have your existence. For the changing of one's place does not bring about any greater nearness to God. No, *God will come to you* (cf. Ex 20.24) wherever you are, if the abode of your soul is such that the Lord himself *comes to dwell within you* and walk with you (cf. Jn 14.23, 2 Cor 6.16). **17.** But if you have your *inner man* (Rom 7.22, Eph 3.16) filled with base thoughts, then even if you were present at Golgotha or on the Mount of Olives or by the memorial-rock of the Resurrection, you would be as far from receiving Christ in yourself as one who has not even begun to confess him.

18a. Therefore, beloved, counsel the brothers⁶⁴ to *quit the body to be with the Lord* (2 Cor 5.8), rather than quit Cappadocia to be in Palestine, **18b.** specially the nuns.⁶⁵ Indeed the virgins ought to refrain

sion, though Emperors might manipulate it as they sought to dominate the Church, For its ongoing practice see *Life of Constantine* 4.43. Ammianus Marcellinus 21.16.18, describes the situation in the reign of Constantius: 'Since throngs of bishops hastened hither and thither on the public post-horses (*iumentis publicis*) to the various synods as they call them, while he sought to make the whole ritual conform to his own will, he (Constantius) cut the sinews of the courier-service (*rei vehiculariae*)', *Ammianus Marcellinus*, three vols, tr. John Rolfe (London: Heinemann, 1950), vol. 2, 185.

⁶⁴ ἀδελφοίς, it means members of the monastic brotherhood, including the sisters.

⁶⁵ ἐξαίρετως τὰς μοναζούσας, i.e. in presenting a principle applicable to all monks, Gregory refers it in particular to the class of 'female monks'.

from public squares⁶⁶ and all-night vigils, for I know the resourceful craftiness of that serpent who disseminates⁶⁷ his poison even through useful practices. Virgins should stay behind walls on every side and go forth from their house⁶⁸ only a few times in a year, when their excursions are required and it is necessary.⁶⁹

18c. But if anyone puts forward the utterance of the Lord to his disciples that they should not quit Jerusalem (cf. Acts 1.4), let him understand the saying. It was because the grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon the Apostles that our Lord charged them *to remain in the one place* (Acts 2.1) *until they were clothed with power from on high* (Lk 24.49)). **19.** Now if what came to pass at the beginning when the Holy Spirit dispensed each of his gifts under the appearance of a flame, were continuing until now, it would be right for all to remain in that place where that dispensing of the gift took place. But *if the Spirit blows where He wills* (Jn 3.8), then those who have become believers here are also made partakers of that gift (cf. Heb 6.4) according to the *analogy of their faith* (Rom 12.6),⁷⁰ not according to their living abroad⁷¹ in Jerusalem.

⁶⁶ φορῶν (forums), interesting as a Latin loan-word.

⁶⁷ παρασπείρας, a subtle hint here also of παρασπειράομαι, to lie coiled beside. Gregory also uses the image of the serpent at 3.6–7.

⁶⁸ τῆς οἰκίας, i.e., one of the several constituent ‘houses’ of the cenobitic community. There was one for professed men, one for professed women, one or two for children, and at least one for guests. See especially Basil’s *Asketikon*, LR 15.

⁶⁹ ‘specially with regard to the nuns . . . requested and it is necessary’, K. The genuineness of this passage is supported by the known composite nature of the ascetic communities under Basil and Peter’s influence, and by the evident context of this Letter in which a male superior of a community has expressed to Gregory his misgivings over the consecrated virgins who wish to depart on pilgrimage. Both the literary style (e.g. vivid metaphor) and the prudence toward women ascetics are characteristically Gregory’s. In the light of the way that Basil continued to edit and augment his ascetic writings, which almost assumed autonomous transmissions according to the particular ascetic circles in which they were found (e.g. Pontus as against Cappadocia), it is possible that Gregory added the passage later in response to some particular circumstance.

⁷⁰ There follows a variant ending in K, a little disturbed and probably involving dittography: . . . not according to the sojourn [of the gift] in Jerusalem, of which [i.e. the Spirit] may all of us who have become partakers reach the kingdom of Heaven in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom [plural genitive in Maraval] is the glory unto ages of ages.

⁷¹ ἀποδήμιον, symmetrically balanced with ἀναλογίαν in an antithesis. Pasquali prefers the *lectio difficilior*, ἐπιδημίαν (‘visit’) Π.

LETTER 3 TO EUSTATHIA AND AMBROSIA AND BASILISSA⁷²

This letter has barely survived thanks entirely to one ancient manuscript, W. The letter first reached print under Calvinist auspices as part of the polemic against pilgrimages (see introduction to **letter 2**). R. Stephens published a version in 1606 together with Letter 2. Isaac Casaubon reedited it and reprinted it with extensive notes at Hanover in 1607 (Pasq. XLIX), having made use of codex W. Gretscher strove to refute Casaubon as well as Stepherns, not without some spite. Casaubon's text was printed together with Gretscher's commentary by Claude Morell in 1615. In the year 1638 the royal printer Aegidius Morell reprinted the 1615 edition with a second set of revisions (*iteratis curis*), though not without many typographical errors. The Migne text (i.e. of the first three Letters) was printed from this edition which is usually referred to as the Morelliana. They were all rendered obsolete by Pasquali's edition, now complemented by Maraval's.

Letter 3 was written immediately after Gregory's return to Cappadocia from his visit to Jerusalem, which took place, according to **3.9**, after the proclamation of 'piety' (= Neo-nicene orthodoxy) through the whole world. This can only refer to the Council of Constantinople in 381, confirmed as it was by imperial authority, and not to a period after the Council of Antioch in 379. Gregory wrote it after his return to the *metropolis* (**3.25**), which means Caesarea of Cappadocia.

It is also testimony to the degree of closely reasoned doctrinal argument that that devout Christian women might be expected to command. Gregory's addressees are three women ascetics whom he had recently met in Jerusalem. The ascetic circle in which these women move has been subject to the heavy pressure of Apollinarian doctrinaires. They seem to have found themselves strangers in their own community and are searching for a more spiritually viable setting in which to live. Gregory urges them to be loyal to the memory and ministry of Basil and to himself as his successor, and warns them strongly and at length against the subtle attractions of sophisticated Apollinarian theologizings.

Gregory Nazianzen's letter 244 is addressed to *Basilissa*, who also seems to be a young woman ascetic finding herself under necessity of moving about in the world. Only that letter is full of moral *sententiae*, not of theological concerns like the present letter. If she is the same Basilissa as here, her two companions have disappeared from the scene for unknown reasons (death? staying behind in Palestine while Basilissa migrated north?) and Nazianzen's letter might reasonably be dated later than the present letter, perhaps in the mid or late 380s.

⁷² Mss.: W (the sole ancient codex on which the transmission of this Letter depends) Q (c); GNO 8.2, 19–27; Maraval 124–147; tr.: Letter 17, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 542–545.

The Antiochene Word/Man Christology that appears in **3.11–24** has its context in the controversy with Apollinarians. Gregory is at pains to demonstrate the integrity of Christ's human nature and his divine nature, and that the one nature in no way not compromise the other. However his brave attempts to account for the unity in Christ⁷³ which are based on his anthropological ideas⁷⁴ were not quite adequate in terms of looming Christological tensions and invited the definitions of the following century.

*Gregory to our most discreet and pious sisters Eustathia and Ambrosia, and to our most discreet and reverent daughter Basilissa, greetings in the Lord*⁷⁵

1. My meeting with the good who are of like mind, and the proofs displayed in your regions of our Master's great loving kindness for us (cf. Tit 3.4), were for me an occasion of the greatest joy and happiness. The festival according to God is revealed to me⁷⁶ from either side: both when I see the saving tokens⁷⁷ of the God who gave us life (cf. Rom 4.17, 1 Tim 6.13) and when I meet with souls in whom such signs of the Lord's grace are so spiritually discernible that one understands that Bethlehem and Golgotha and Olivet and the *Anastasis*⁷⁸ are truly in the heart that possesses God.⁷⁹

2. For one in whom Christ has been formed through a good conscience (cf. Gal 4.19), who through godly fear has nailed the promptings of the flesh (cf. Gal 5.24) and become *co-crucified with Christ* (Gal

⁷³ Cf. letter 3.15, 19–20 and letter 32.

⁷⁴ Cf. his account of human conception and the origin of the soul in *On the Soul and Resurrection* 9.13–19 (Krabinger 120–122).

⁷⁵ The similarity to the address of GNaz Letter 238, to the community at Sannabodae, may be remarked. This Letter is transmitted also under the name of GNyssa in two mss.

⁷⁶ Pasquali finds ἐορτή (festival) suspect. If the term is genuine, it is likely that Gregory means *Pascha*, the celebration of the saving events of the Lord's passion, death and resurrection that took place in Jerusalem.

⁷⁷ τὰ σωτήρια σύμβολα. Since Gregory is hardly a propagandist for the spiritual benefits conferred by pilgrimages, perhaps the adjective is explicative (= 'of that which saves'); so Casaubon (NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 542, n. 1): 'that is, *of the Saviour*, not things causing salvation'.

⁷⁸ I.e. the Church of the Resurrection, called to-day the Holy Sepulchre.

⁷⁹ Gregory's attitude to visiting the holy places seems to this point more positive than in the previous letter, though he readily spiritualises the experience. He commences a series of metaphors, in which the different places connected with the Paschal events are but pointers to the interior realization of the mysteries of which they are an external witness. What Gregory is saying, ever so gently, is that though his addressees live at the holy sites, the true tokens of Christ's presence are seen in deeply spiritual souls, those who have been interiorly 'Christed', and that, he is pleased to note, is what he sees in them.

22.20), who has rolled away from himself the heavy stone (cf. Mt 28.2) of this life's delusion, and has come forth from the bodily tomb (cf. Mk 16.8) to *walk in newness of life* (Rom 6.4), having abandoned the material and earthbound life of human beings and mounted through sublime desire to the heavenly citizenship (cf. Phil 3.20), who is mindful of *the things that are above where Christ is* (Col 3.1–2), and is no longer weighed down by the burden of the body, but has lightened it through a purer life, so that the flesh like a cloud treads on high with him⁸⁰ *the things that are above*⁸¹—such a one, in my judgment, is among those devoted ones⁸² in whom the reminders of the Master's loving-kindness are seen.

3. So when I saw the holy places with the senses and saw too the signs of these places manifested in you, I was filled with a joy so great that it cannot be described in words (cf. 1 Pet 1.8). **4.** But since it seems to be difficult, if not to say impossible, for a human being to enjoy any good unmixed with bad, so for me the taste of sweetness was mingled with some sense of bitter things too. For this reason, after the good cheer of these delights, I grew despondent on my journey back to my fatherland, pondering the truth of the Lord's word where he says *the whole world lies in evil* (Jn 5.19), such that no part of the inhabited world is free of its share of the worse. For if the very spot that has received the holy footprint of the true Life is itself not cleared of evil thorns,⁸³ what are we to think of other places where participation in the good has been sown merely by hearing and preaching (cf. Mt 13.7–8)?

5. What I have in mind by saying this does not have to be set out more plainly in words. Affairs themselves proclaim the melancholy truth more loudly than any speech. **6.** The lawgiver who is our Life has laid down for us but one enmity, I mean, that which is against

⁸⁰ συμμετεωροπορεῖν, a word of Gregory's coinage, building on Plato's μετεωροπορεῖν, *Phaedrus* 246C.

⁸¹ See Plato, *Phaedrus* 246c for the doctrine of *anamnesis*, according to which we make progress through recollection of the higher 'forms' seen with the mind's eye before the body entrapped and confused us.

⁸² κατονομασμένων. κατοναμάζω in the passive = 'named, mentioned', and by extension 'famous', and so may refer to the holy places listed above. There is, however, a derived sense. In *Philebus* 5.43.1 it means 'betrothed', and in Dion. Halicarnassos 1.16 and Phalaris *Ep.* 84.1 it means 'devoted' (to the gods).

⁸³ This is a hint that Gregory's mission of mediation in Jerusalem was a failure, and even more than a failure. He incurred flagrant hostility.

the serpent. For no other end has he commanded us to exercise this power of hatred, except that of repelling vice. For *I will establish enmity*, he says, *between you and him* (cf. Gen 3.15). Since vice is a complex and many-faceted thing, the Word hints at this through the serpent, indicating the versatility of vice by the intricate pattern of its scales. **7.** But when we enacted the behests of our adversary we became the allies of the serpent, and so we turned the hatred against one another, and I think not only against ourselves, but against him who gave the commandment. For he says, *You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy* (Mt 5.43), charging us to deem the foe of our nature as our only enemy, and declaring that all who share that nature are the neighbours to each other. But this gross-hearted generation (cf. Ps 4.3) has sundered us from our neighbour and made us welcome the serpent and be dazzled by the bright markings of his scales.

8. I for my part maintain that to hate the enemies of God is lawful, and that such a hatred pleases the Master. By enemies I mean those who in every way deny the glory of the Master, whether the Jews or those who are manifestly idolaters or those who through Arius' teachings make an idol of the creature, and so take up again the Jewish error. But if *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (Mt 28.19) are devoutly glorified and paid homage by those who have believed that in the unconfused and distinct Holy Trinity there is one nature, glory, kingship, power, pious worship and authority over all, then what good reason for warfare can there be? **9.** While the teachings of the heresy⁸⁴ prevailed, it was well to brave the authorities through whom the teaching of our adversaries was seemingly strengthened, in order that the saving Word might not be over-ruled by human rulers. But now when piety is openly proclaimed in the same way *through the whole world from one end of heaven to the other thereof* (Ps 18.6),⁸⁵ whoever makes war against those who proclaim piety, fights not them but him whom they piously proclaim. What other goal should he have who has a zeal for God than to announce the glory of God in every way (cf. Phil 1.18)? **10.** As long as *the Only-begotten God* (Jn

⁸⁴ I.e. Arianism, in its varied shades, promoted for the most part by the eastern Emperors, from late in the reign of Constantine to the accession of Theodosius I (379).

⁸⁵ This must refer to the Council of 381, buttressed by imperial authority, not to the earlier more provincial council of Antioch (379).

1.18) is paid homage *with all the heart and soul and mind* (cf. Mt 22.37) and is believed to be in all things what the Father is, and the Holy Spirit likewise is glorified with a homage of equal honour, what plausible excuse for fighting do these hyper-sophistic controversialists have, who tear the seamless robe (cf. Jn 19.23) and divide the Lord's name between Paul and Cephas (cf. 1 Cor 1.12) and keep aloof from contact with those who pay homage to Christ as from something loathsome? They all but shout openly in so many words: *Away from me! Do not come near me, for I am pure* (Is 65.5).⁸⁶

11. Let them even be allowed to have a little more as to knowledge, than they think they have grasped:⁸⁷ yet can they have more than to believe that the true Son of God is true God?⁸⁸ **12.** For in the confession of the true God all pious and saving conceptions are included: that he is good, just, powerful, both changeless and unalterable and always the same, incapable of changing to worse or to the better, because the first is not his nature and the second he does not have in him. For what can be higher than the highest, what can be still have more good than *the* good? **13.** He who is perceived in all the perfection of the good is unalterable in any form of change. It was not that he showed himself as such on certain occasions. He was always so, both before the dispensation as man,⁸⁹ and during it, and after it. In all his activities on our behalf nothing of that changeless and unalterable nature was adapted to what was incongruent with it. **14.** What is incorruptible and unalterable by nature is always so. It does not join in the alterability of the lowly nature when through dispensation it comes to be there. Take the sun as an example. When it sends down its rays into the lower realm, it does not dim the brightness of its rays. Instead, through its rays it transforms the darkness into light. So also, when the true Light shone in our darkness (cf. Jn 1.4–5, 9), it was not overshadowed by the darkness, but illumined the gloom with itself.

15. Since our humanity was in darkness as it is written, *they have neither known nor understood, they walk about in darkness* (Ps 81.5), he who

⁸⁶ Quite clearly Gregory was repudiated by a party of theological opinion in Jerusalem.

⁸⁷ The text is corrupt, both copies Q and c insert alternative expressions here.

⁸⁸ Thus the point at issue concerns Christology and, as we shall see, how the divine immutability was preserved in the Incarnation.

⁸⁹ πρὸ τῆς κατὰ ἄνθρωπον οἰκονομίας. 'Economy' or 'Dispensation' is a regular term, especially in Gregory, for divine plan of salvation implemented in the Incarnation.

shone in our darkened nature dispersed the ray of his divinity through our whole compound,⁹⁰ through soul I say and body too, and so accommodated our entire humanity to his own light, and brought it to completion in himself by that blend⁹¹ which he himself is. And inasmuch as the deity is incorruptible, though it had come to be in a corruptible body, so it was not altered by any change even as it healed what was changeable in our soul, just as in the art of medicine, he who is treating bodily ills, in touching the patient, does not himself become infected, but thoroughly heals that which is diseased.⁹²

16. Let no one therefore take the Gospel saying in an undue sense, and suppose that our human nature that was in Christ was transformed into something more divine by a kind of progress and sequence. The saying that *he increased in stature and in wisdom and in favour* is recorded in Scripture (Lk 2.32) in order to prove that the Lord truly came to be in our composition,⁹³ and to leave no room for those who teach that there was a kind of phantasm cloaking itself in bodily form, rather than a true Theophany. **17.** It is for this reason that the Scripture also unashamedly reports of him all the marks of our nature: eating, drinking, sleeping, weariness, nurture, increase in bodily stature, growing up—all that characterizes our nature, except the tendency to sin. But sin anyway is a miscarriage of our nature and not one of its properties. Just as disease and disablement⁹⁴ are not congenital to us from the beginning, but come about contrary to nature, so the disposition towards vice is to be considered a disabling of the good that is in us by nature and is not to be understood to have subsistence of itself, but is seen in the absence of the good.⁹⁵ **18.** Therefore he who reconfigured the

⁹⁰ τοῦ συγκρίματος ἡμῶν.

⁹¹ ἀνακράσει. In the following century *anakrasis* was judged as an inadequate term for expressing the character of Christ's unity. Gregory is about to attempt his own account of the union of the divine and the human in the conception of Christ, an attempt not always successful in terms of later Christological precision. See Jean-René Bouchet, 'Le vocabulaire de l'union et du rapport des natures chez saint Grégoire de Nysse', *Revue Thomiste* 68 (1968), 533–582.

⁹² Cf. *Against Apollinaris* GNO 3.1, 171.21.

⁹³ τῷ ἡμετέρῳ φουραμάτι, or 'mixture'. By this term Gregory means that the integrity of human nature in its elements was assumed by the Lord. Apollinarism taught a truncated humanity in which the Word replaced the functions of the human higher soul.

⁹⁴ ἢ πῆρωσις, deformity, maiming, mutilation, disability.

⁹⁵ Gregory shared with Origen, Plotinus, the Platonic tradition generally and

elements⁹⁶ of our nature by his divine power preserved it in himself free of disablement and disease, not admitting the disablement worked by sin in the will. For *he committed no sin*, it says, *no guile was found in his mouth* (1 Pet 2.22). **19.** But this that we see in him did not exist after any interval of time: for immediately the human being within Mary, *in whom Wisdom built her own house* (Prov 9.1), was by its own nature of our passible composition, and at the same time, by the coming upon her of the Holy Spirit and the *overshadowing of the power of the Most High* (Lk 1.35), immediately became⁹⁷ that which the overshadowing was by its own nature—for indisputably, the less is blessed by the greater. **20.** Seeing that the power of the deity is something infinite and immeasurable, while that which is human is slight and of no account, at the same time that the Spirit came upon the Virgin and the power of the Most High overshadowed her, the tabernacle formed⁹⁸ by such an impulse did not draw along with it anything of human decay. Instead, whatever it was in its constitution, if indeed a human being, so it remained, yet Spirit nonetheless, and Grace and Power. That which is proper to our nature was illumined by the superabundance of the divine power (cf. 2 Cor 4.7).⁹⁹

Augustine what Meredith calls a ‘metaphysical optimism’ (*Gregory of Nyssa*, 7), in which the ‘good’ and reality, ‘being’ and ‘value’ tended to be identified. Consequently evil has at best a relative, negational character; its domain is that of created human choices. See *Catechetical Oration* 5.11–12 and *Homily 5 on Eccl.* GNO 5.15.

⁹⁶ τὴν φύσιν ἡμῶν πρὸς τὴν θεϊαν δύναμιν μεταστοιχειώσας; i.e. our human nature as it was assumed at the moment of Christ’s conception. Gregory uses μεταστοιχείω and μεταποιέω (here translated as ‘transform’) interchangeably.

⁹⁷ ἐγένετο, the unfortunate term is, however, qualified by an iterated εὐθὺς (‘immediately’). A better choice of verb might have been ἐγέννετο (begotten) but there is only one manuscript, and it cannot be tested as a possible (and very easy) scribal error. Using an Antiochene Word/Man Christology rather than the Word/Flesh Christology of Alexandria, and wishing to safeguard the integrity of Christ’s humanity against Apollinaris and against various types of docetism, Gregory strives, unsuccessfully in terms of later definitions, to account for the operations of Christ’s divine and human natures at the moment of conception in Mary’s womb. See also *Against Apollinaris* 8 (GNO 3.223–224). It is no wonder that some of his Christological formulations were later considered favourable to Nestorianism. The terms of the *hypostatic union* were not hammered out till the period between the Council of Ephesus (431) and the Council of Chalcedon (451), according to which the human being conceived in the womb of Mary never ‘became’ divine even instantaneously as Gregory argues here. Its hypostasis preceded and accompanied the human conception, and it was a divine hypostasis. Compare Gregory’s Christology in letter 32.8.

⁹⁸ πηγνύμενον, lit. ‘made to congeal’, in our terms, the distinct new human zygote. The meaning virtually equates to a use of ἐγένετο above.

⁹⁹ Christological statements such as here and in *Against Apollinaris* (to Theophilus

21. Inasmuch as there are two boundaries of human life: the one where we begin and the one where we finish, it was necessary that he who cures our whole life (cf. Mt 4.23) enfold us at both these extremities and grasp both our beginning and our end, that he might raise the prostrate sufferer in both. **22.** Therefore what we understand concerning the end we reckon also for the beginning. For just as there he caused the body to be unyoked from the soul in accord with the dispensation, yet the indivisible deity which had been blended¹⁰⁰ once for all with the subject¹⁰¹ was not sundered either from that body or from that soul, but while by means of the soul it was in Paradise preparing an entrance for all human beings in the person of the Thief (cf. Lk 23.43, 1 Pet 3.19), it remained by means of the body *in the heart of the earth* (cf. Mt 12.40), destroying him that had the power of Death—which is why even his body is called *the Lord* (Mt 28.6, Jn 20.2, 13) on account of the inherent deity—so also at the beginning, we reckon that the power of the Most High, coalescing¹⁰² with our entire nature through the coming upon of the Holy Spirit, came to be both in our soul,¹⁰³ since it was fitting that it should come to be in the soul, and came also to be mingled¹⁰⁴ with the body, so that our salvation might be wholly perfect in all respects, while that heavenly and God-befitting passionlessness was nonetheless preserved both at the beginning of his human life and at its end. For the beginning was not as our beginning or the end as our end, but he showed in the one and in the other his divine power: the beginning not being defiled by pleasure, or the end resulting in corruption.

23. Now when we cry aloud these things and bear witness that *Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Cor 1.24), always

3.265) and *Catechetical Discourse* 10 were later claimed by Eutychians, but at the Council of Ephesus, St Cyril of Alexandria ‘showed that these expressions were capable of a Catholic interpretation, and pardonable in discussing the difficult and mysterious question of the union of the two natures’ (NPNF ser. 2, 544, n. 1).

¹⁰⁰ ἀνακραθείσα. On the terms used in this passage: ἀνακραννύμι, ἐγχεράννυμι, καταμίγνυμι, which express ‘fusion’, ‘blending’ and ‘mixing’, see Bouchet 1968, 547. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen’s use of συγκράσει in Letter 101.21.

¹⁰¹ τῷ ὑποκειμένῳ. Perhaps ‘receptacle’ might yield a slightly less controversial sense.

¹⁰² ἐγκραθείσα.

¹⁰³ I.e. the human soul of Christ in possessing which he shared fully in our nature; distinctly anti-Apollinarian.

¹⁰⁴ καταμίγνυται.

changeless, always incorruptible, who, though coming in the changeable and the corruptible, is himself undefiled, and cleansing what is defiled; what unrighteousness have we committed and why are we hated? And what is the meaning of this competing array of new altars? **24.** Do we *announce another Jesus* (2 Cor 11.4)?¹⁰⁵ Do we even hint at another? Do we bring forth other scriptures (cf. Gal 1.6–9)? Have any of us dared to call ‘man-bearer’ the holy Virgin the God-bearer¹⁰⁶—which is what we hear that some of them recklessly allege? Do we make up myths about three Resurrections?¹⁰⁷ Do we promise the gluttony of the Millennium? Do we assert that Jewish animal-sacrifices shall be restored again? Do we lower men’s hopes to the Jerusalem below, imagining it rebuilt with stones of a more brilliant material?¹⁰⁸ Is any such charge brought against us that we should be reckoned as something to be shunned, and that in some places another altar should be erected in opposition to us, as if we *profaned their holy things* (Lev 19.8, 22.15, Num 18.32 etc.)?

25. My heart burns with indignation and grief (cf. Ps 72.21) at these things, and now that I have set foot in the metropolis¹⁰⁹ again, I am eager to unburden my soul of its bitterness by writing to your love. For your part, wherever the Holy Spirit shall direct you (cf. Jn 16.13), go with him; *walk behind God* (Deut 13.4), do not *confer with flesh and blood* (Gal 1.16). Provide no-one with an occasion for vaunting, lest they vaunt over you, inflating their vainglory through your life (cf. 2 Cor 11.12, 1 Cor 3.21, Gal 6.13–14). **26.** Only remember the holy Fathers, into whose hands you were commended

¹⁰⁵ For the Apollinarian ideas that follow here see H. Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodicea und seine Schule*, Tübingen, 1904, 266.17ff., GNaz Letter 101, PG 37, 193A; Basil, Letter 263, *to the Westerners*, Def. 4.88–101 at 96–99.

¹⁰⁶ μή την ἁγίαν παρθένον την θεοτόκον, ἐτόλμησέ τις ἡμῶν καὶ ἀνθρωποτόκον εἰπεῖν. Gregory reports an Apollinarian accusation against him, that he espouses an Antiochene (construed by some as a proto-Nestorian) Christology. Yet it was not Nestorius, but Theodore of Mopsuestia who called Mary ἀνθρωποτόκον (PG 37.193A), anticipated it seems by Diodorus of Tarsus (PG 33, 1560C). By invoking this term Gregory allies himself with the Alexandrian tradition of Christology, which from the time of Dionysius’ letter to Paul of Samosata (c. 250 AD) accorded the Virgin Mary the title *Theotokos*. Cf. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 51: ‘If anyone does not call Mary *Theotokos*, he is outside ‘deity’.’

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Basil, Letter 263, Def. 4.88–101 at 98–99.

¹⁰⁸ Such a project had been mooted under Emperor Julian (361–363), as part of his polemic against the Christians.

¹⁰⁹ Presumably this is Caesarea in Cappadocia; cf. 11.3 where ‘Cappadocia’ seems to mean Caesarea, and 14.3 ‘the metropolis of the Cappadocians’.

by your blessed Father, and to whom we by God's grace were deemed worthy to succeed. *Do not remove the boundaries which your fathers established* (Prov 22.28) or think less of the plainness of our simpler proclamation (cf. 1 Cor 1.21) or attribute more to their subtle teachings (cf. Heb 13.9).¹¹⁰ Walk by the ancient rule of the Faith (cf. Gal 6.16), and *the God of peace* (Heb 13.20) will be with you. May the Lord preserve you strong in mind and body uncorrupted (cf. Eph 6.24) is our prayer for you.

LETTER 4 TO EUSEBIUS¹¹¹

The identity of the addressee of this letter has been doubtful, the name Eusebius being a very common one. According to Moore¹¹² he is Eusebius, the Bishop of Chalcis in Coele-Syria, a firm Catholic who participated in the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Daniélou¹¹³ on the other hand maintained that we have here the same Eusebius mentioned in *Against Fate*, a leading pagan at Constantinople whom Gregory met during his long stay there in 386, and in whose turn to Christianity Gregory had had a part to play. Maraval however¹¹⁴ regards the identity of the addressee as uncertain. In his assessment, the absence of honorifics seems against his being a bishop, and, moreover, it would be surprising if a man so characterized for dignity and age as Eusebius of Constantinople should be called 'dear head'. That objection may be countered. Sometimes it is precisely the advanced age even of dignitaries that invites freer expressions of endearment.

Daniélou dated the letter to Easter 387 given his identification of Eusebius and a number of common themes between this letter and several works written about that time: *On Fate* (386), *On the day of Christ's birth* (25 December 386), and the *Homily on Pascha* restored to Gregory by P. Nautin (387).

The letter is very important evidence of the institution in the Christian East of a feast of the Nativity (Dec. 25) as distinct from Epiphany (Jan 6), which it has been suggested introduced in Cappadocia in the late 370s–380s.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ After the exile of Cyril of Jerusalem Basil had been called upon to deal with the spread of Apollinarianism among the monks and nuns of Palestine (Letters 258, 259). Cyril returned in 382, but there had been an interlude of Arian rule, as described by Sozomen 4.25. The disunity was heightened by the fact that Palestine was the melting pot of pilgrims and settlers from all over the Christian world.

¹¹¹ Mss.: PFV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 27–30; tr.: Letter 1, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 527–528.

¹¹² NPNF 2nd ser. vol. 5, p. 527).

¹¹³ *Chronologie des Sermons*, 366, 368.

¹¹⁴ *Lettres*, p. 146, n. 1.

¹¹⁵ See Daniélou, 'La Chronologie', 366, Maraval, *Lettres* 147 n. 2, and 'Retour sur quelques dates', 154, and especially J. Mossay, *Les fêtes de Noël et d'Épiphanie d'après*

Gregory elucidates doctrinal significances from the celebration of Christmas at the winter solstice and the celebration of Pascha at the Spring equinox. It is an early and outstanding example of meditation on the connections between the liturgy and the natural cycle of the year and the application of these reflections to the moral life. Such associations of time and eternity were facilitated by the gradual de-paganization and Christianization of civil time throughout the 4th century, culminating in the reform of the calendar under Theodosius I (AD 379–395), during whose reign this letter was written.

On the custom amongst Eastern Christians of exchanging presents at the great festivals, cf. the introduction to *On the Making of Man*, addressed to Gregory's brother Peter; and Gregory Nazianzen, letter 54 to Helladius and letter 87 to Theodore of Tyana.

*To Eusebius*¹¹⁶

1. When during the winter the day's span begins to lengthen as the sun turns again on his upward course, we keep the feast of the Theophany of the true Light¹¹⁷ who shone through the flesh upon human life. But now when the luminary has in his cycle already reached mid-heaven, so that night and day measure an equal interval against each other, the return of human nature from death to life becomes for us the theme of this great and universal festival, which the whole life of those who have welcomed the mystery of the Resurrection joins in celebrating at the same time.

2. What then does the premise of my letter mean? Since it is our custom in these public holy festivals to manifest in every way the affections in our hearts, and there are some who express their good cheer by offering presents of their own, we thought it right not to leave you without the homage¹¹⁸ of our gifts, but to salute your lofty and high-minded soul with the scanty offerings of our poverty. **3.** And the offering we bring to you through this letter is the letter itself.¹¹⁹

les sources littéraires cappadociennes du IV^e siècle (Louvain, 1965), p. 6. Basil himself may have been the initiator; see his *Homily on the generation of Christ* PG 31 1457A–1475A.

¹¹⁶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ εὐσεβίω F, τοῦ ἀγίου γρηγορίου τοῦ νύσσης πρὸς εὐσέβιον V, τοῦ αὐτοῦ P.

¹¹⁷ I.e. the Nativity (25 December) rather than Epiphany (6 Jan). The same theme of the turning of the light and its gradual increase till the victory of Easter, appears in *On the Nativity*, while his homily on Epiphany, *On the Day of Lights* is taken up with the imagery of Baptism.

¹¹⁸ ἀγέραςτον, suggesting the age and dignity of the addressee.

¹¹⁹ Other examples of exchanging literary gifts at the great festivals may be found in the opening verses of G^Nyssa, *On the making of man*, sent to his brother Peter, and in G^Naz Letter 54 *To Helladius*, Letter 87 *To Theodore of Tyana*.

Here is no discourse wreathed with mellifluous and well-constructed phrases, that this letter might be thought a gift in literary circles. Instead, may the mystical gold, which is wrapped up in the faith of Christians as in a kind of envelope, be my present to you—that it is, when it has been unwrapped in these lines as far as it may, and has shown its hidden lustre.¹²⁰

4. We must then go back to our introduction. Why is it only when the night has advanced to its further limit and the nocturnal increase admits no further addition, that he appears to us in flesh—he who holds all in his hands and holds all things in his sway by his own power, who is not contained even by all that exists, but himself circumscribes the whole and dwells in the smallest thing, and whose power at the same time so coextends with his beneficent will¹²¹ and so shows itself wherever his will inclines, that neither in the creation of the world was the power found weaker than the intention, nor when he determined to stoop down to the lowliness of our nature for the benefit of human beings, was he powerless to do so, but indeed came to be in that state, though without leaving the universe ungoverned?

5. Since there is some reason for the two seasons, why does he appear in the flesh at that time, but when the day is equally proportioned he who had returned to the earth through sin (cf. Gen 3.19) restores man to life?¹²² By briefly expounding this in a discourse as best I can, I shall make my letter a present to you.

6. Surely you in your wisdom have guessed the mystery hinted at in these coincidences: that the advance of night is cut off by the access of the light, and the darkness begins to diminish as the length of the day increases through successive additions. This much may

¹²⁰ οἷον τινι ἀποδεσμῷ. Maraval remarks (*Lettres* 149 n. 3) that in ancient Rome, guests used to bring presents wrapped in a *mappa*, a linen napkin. The practice continued in the late ancient and Byzantine world with the added idea of presenting gifts to God or to Emperors purified of mundane usage, signified by being protected in the napkin; it is well illustrated in the art of the period. By ‘mystical gold’, Gregory means the economy of salvation commemorated in the annual Christmas–Easter liturgical cycle.

¹²¹ Gregory explains at length how the incarnation displays both God’s power and his goodness in *Catechetical Discourse* 24 (Maraval, *Lettres*, 151 n. 1).

¹²² The present tense may be noted. The mysteries of Christ are contemporary events, inasmuch as they are communicated even now through the sacraments and the liturgy.

perhaps be evident even to the many, that the darkness is closely related to sin—indeed this is how vice is named in the Scripture (cf. Jn 3.19, Rom 13.12). **7.** Therefore the season in which our mystery has its beginning is itself an interpretation of the dispensation¹²³ on behalf of our souls. For when vice was already poured forth without bounds, we needed the day made bright for us with virtues by him who infused so great a light in our souls. This was in order that the illumined life might extended to the greatest degree by growing through increments of the good, while the life of vice is diminished to the smallest degree through gradual attenuations—for the growth of the good amounts to the same thing as the lessening of the bad.

8. But the occurrence of the feast of the Resurrection at the equinox offers in itself this interpretation, that we shall no more contend in equally opposed ranks, vice grappling with the good in an equal match, but rather the illumined life shall prevail, the gloom of idolatry being consumed by the superabundance of the day. **9.** For this reason also, when the course of the moon has reached the fourteenth day, it shows her facing the sun's rays, filled with all the richness of his brilliance, not permitting any alternation of darkness to appear in any part. When she takes the place of the setting sun, she herself does not set before she mingles her own with the true rays of the sun, so that there remains one light continuously through the whole course of day and night, uninterrupted by any interval of darkness.¹²⁴

10. We offer these reflections to you, dear head, as a gift from our hand, poor as it is in discourse; and may your whole life be a festival and great day, purified as much as possible, from nightly gloom.

LETTER 5 TO THOSE WHO DISCREDIT HIS ORTHODOXY¹²⁵

The most satisfactory setting of this letter would appear to be the events reported in **letter 19**. Pasquali considered that this letter, with its brief

¹²³ τῆς ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν οἰκονομίας, i.e. the events of the Incarnation and Paschal redemption.

¹²⁴ Macrina/Gregory discourse at great length on the movements of the moon in relation to the Sun, in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* 2.11–16.

¹²⁵ Mss.: V N; ed.: GNO 8.2, 31–34, Maraval 154–162; tr.: Letter 2, NPNF ser.

exposition of the faith, was composed for a synod of bishops convened either in Neocaesarea or in Sebasteia. It seemed to him to have been written in the interval between the death of Eustathius Bishop of Sebasteia and the election of Peter, Gregory's brother, before the doctrinal settlement of the Council of Constantinople in 381. He thought that the letter may have been called forth by the trouble fomented against Gregory by those coming from the region of Galatia (**letter 19.11**).

In this scenario, Gregory is writing in the year 380 at the request of his supporters in Sebasteia, i.e. the same circle who sent an embassy to Ibora to sue for his presence at the synod soon to be convened to elect the metropolitan bishop of Armenia Minor. These friends wish to disarm those who are hostile to Gregory's doctrinal position. Such opponents appear to be of the Pneumatomachian party, followers of the deceased bishop of Sebasteia, Eustathius. These doctrinaires were especially suspicious of assimilation to Sabellianism (**4.2**) on the part of supporters of the *homoousios*, and morbidly sensitive to any innovation in statements concerning the Holy Spirit. Gregory contrives here to expound a full Neo-nicene faith without ever mentioning the *homoousios*, or indeed the term *ousia* at all. In this he is following Basil's *oikonomia* in reconciling 'Sabellians' or those of Marcellus' party, when in letter 265 he asks nothing more of them than that they should repudiate their former opinions before being admitted to communion. Yet here Gregory is at pains to emphasize the definition of *hypostasis* that was a cornerstone of the Neo-nicene position and that had been perversely ignored by Eustathius and his followers.

Maraval¹²⁶ however, thinks the objectors are more likely to be classic Arians/Homoians, because, he says, Gregory is not particularly insisting on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In answer to this it might be said that while Gregory's exposition of faith here is even-handed with regard to all the persons of the Trinity, the divinity of the Holy Spirit is clearly affirmed at **5.5b–7**. We do at any rate seem to be in a period before the council of 381.

In **5.2** we have the most important evidence that Gregory received a commission from the orthodox bishops of the East (= the Neo-nicene Council of Antioch in 379) to reconcile to Catholic communion the old Nicenes associated with Marcellus of Ancyra.

Because precision is at a premium in these doctrinal definitions, the major terms in **5.5** and **5.9** are transliterated and italicised; most should be perfectly familiar to English-speakers versed in Church doctrine.

2, vol. 5, 528–529. Maraval collated N, set aside by Pasquali. It sometimes offers superior grammar to V in many minor details, which will be noted here. Where N does come into its own is in clarifying the argument of 5a.

¹²⁶ *Lettres*, p. 163, n. 3.

*Letter to those who discredit his orthodoxy, requested by those in Sebasteia*¹²⁷

1a. Some brothers of one mind with us told us of the defamation aimed against us by *those who hate peace* (Ps 119.6) and *slander their neighbour in secret* (Ps 100.5), who have no fear of the great and terrible judgment-seat of him who has promised that in that examination of our life we must all expect that an account will be required even of *idle words* (cf. Mt 12.36). **1b.** They say that the charges being spread about against us are such as these: that we maintain views opposed to those who set forth the right and sound faith at Nicaea, and that without discernment and examination we received into the communion of the Catholic Church those who formerly assembled at Ancyra under the name of Marcellus.

2. That the lie might not prevail against the truth, we put forward in another letter a sufficient defence against the charges made against us.¹²⁸ In this we affirmed before the Lord that we had neither departed from the faith of the holy fathers nor had we done anything without discernment and examination in the case of those who came over from the assembly of Marcellus¹²⁹ to the ecclesiastical communion, but we did everything only after our orthodox <brothers>¹³⁰ and fellow ministers in the East had entrusted to us the consideration of the case of these persons and had approved the actions to be taken.¹³¹

3. But though we had made that written defence, again some of the brothers of one mind with us begged that there come privately¹³²

¹²⁷ A translation of the inscription in V as qualified by Maraval. τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν γρηγορίου ἐπισκόπου νύσης ἐπιστολὴ τῇ ὀρθοδόξῃ (unsure) κατὰ σεβάστ(ειαν) αἰτηθ(εῖσα) V, ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πρὸς ἡμῶν γρηγορίου ἐπισκόπου νύσσης πρὸς φλαϊανὸν ἐπίσκοπον (Epistle of Bishop Gregory our father among the saints to Flavian) N, αὐτοῦ πίστει παρὰ τῶν (his orthodox faith, by) added by Pasquali, τῇ ὀρθοδόξῃ τοῖς, Maraval's simplification of Pasquali's phrase.

¹²⁸ Maraval (157, n. 3) asks whether this document may have been preserved as the *To Eustathius* (GNO 3.1/3–16), where he defends himself against just such charges as he has mentioned.

¹²⁹ Marcellus of Ancyra was a signatory to the Nicene council of 325, and initially had the support of St Athanasius. But though Marcellus formally condemned Sabellius, he did not accord any real subsistence to the *Logos*, which in his view, was merely an operational faculty of God. Athanasius withdrew his support from 345. At the time of Gregory's writing, the 'Marcellians' were fading from the theological scene.

¹³⁰ lacuna as filled by Pasquali. Maraval suggest 'bishops'.

¹³¹ The council of Neo-nicenes at Antioch in 379 is meant. Cf. the *Life of Macrina* (GNO 17.1, Maraval, *Vie de Sainte Macrine*, ch. 15a, 190–192).

¹³² ἰδίως, i.e. that in addition to his previous *apologia*, Gregory make a separate statement of his doctrinal positions.

in our own utterance an exposition of the faith in which is our full conviction, following as we do the God-inspired utterances and the tradition of the Fathers.¹³³ We therefore deemed it necessary also to treat briefly these topics.

4. We confess that the doctrine of the Lord which he gave to his disciples when he delivered to them the mystery of piety¹³⁴ is the foundation and root of right and *sound faith* (Tit 1.13, 2.2), and we do not believe there is anything else surer or more sublime than that tradition. Now the Lord's doctrine is this: *Go*, he said, *make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 28.19). **5a.** Therefore, since the power that gives life to those who are reborn from death to eternal life comes from the Holy Trinity upon those who are deemed worthy of the grace through faith, and likewise the grace is imperfect if any of the names of the Holy Trinity are omitted in saving baptism (cf. Acts 19.2–3)—**5b.** for the mystery¹³⁵ of rebirth is neither perfected without the Father¹³⁶ by the Son and the Spirit¹³⁷ alone, nor does the perfection of life come through the Father and the Spirit in baptism if the Son is passed over in silence, nor is the grace of the Resurrection perfected by the Father¹³⁸ and the Son if the Spirit¹³⁹ is omitted.¹⁴⁰ **5c.** For this reason we place all our hope and the assurance of the salvation of our souls in the three *hypostases* acknowledged by these names, and we believe in *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Pet 1.3) who is *the fountain of life* (cf. Ps 35.10), and in *the only-begotten Son of the Father* (Jn 3.14, 18) who is *the Author of life*, as

¹³³ I.e. Scripture and Tradition.

¹³⁴ τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον. As frequently in Gregory, 'piety' = orthodox faith and worship.

¹³⁵ μυστήριον, i.e. the liturgy of the sacrament. It is the classic derivation of orthodox doctrine from the apostolic tradition of prayer and liturgy.

¹³⁶ Maraval derives a satisfactory text of 5a through N. Here N has χωρὶς πατρὸς, V has χωρὶς πνεύματι (without the Spirit).

¹³⁷ πᾶν N, πατρί V.

¹³⁸ πατρί N, πνεύματι V.

¹³⁹ πᾶν N, πατρί V. Because Pasquali relied upon V which presents a defective sequence of the three persons in 5a, he accepted Vittello's amendments to make a concluding sense of the whole: 'in the Spirit and the Son if the Father be omitted'.

¹⁴⁰ Gregory affirms the important principle that all the persons of the Trinity are engaged in the same work of salvation. All saving acts are accomplished by the whole Trinity, not by individual hypostases separately as the Arians argued. See letter **33.6g**, **7f–h**, **8d**, *To Ablabius that there are not three gods* GNO 3.1, 47–48, 50 (NPNF ser. 2 vol. 5, 331–336 at 334).

the Apostle says (Acts 3.15), and in the Holy Spirit of God, concerning whom the Lord said, *it is the Spirit who gives life* (Jn 6.40).¹⁴¹

6. And since the grace of incorruptibility is bestowed on us who are redeemed from death through faith in *Father and Son and Holy Spirit* in saving baptism, as we have said, it follows that, guided by these, we believe that nothing servile, nothing created, nothing unworthy of the majesty of the Father is to be numbered together with him in the Holy Trinity, because the life which comes to us through faith in the Holy Trinity is one, taking its source in the God of all, issuing through the Son, and effected¹⁴² in the Holy Spirit. **7.** Having this full assurance, therefore, we are baptized as we were commanded, and we believe as we are baptized, and we glorify as we believe;¹⁴³ so that our baptism, our faith, and our doxology echo in one accord: *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (Mt. 28.19).

8. But if anyone speaks of two or three gods or of three deities, let him be anathema. And if anyone, following Arius' perversion, says that the Son or the Holy Spirit came into being from things that are not, let him be anathema. **9.** But as many as *walk by the rule* of truth (cf. Gal 6.16, Phil 3.16) and piously acknowledge the three *hypostases* in their distinct properties, and believe that there is one Godhead, one goodness, one principle,¹⁴⁴ one authority and power (cf. 1 Cor 15.24), and thus neither set aside the sovereignty of the *monarchy*,¹⁴⁵ nor fall away into polytheism, nor confuse the *hypostases*, nor synthesize the Holy Trinity from heterogeneous and dissimilar elements, but receive in simplicity the dogma of the faith, placing all *their hope of salvation* (1 Thess 5.8) in *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (Mt 28.19)—these in our judgment are of the same mind with us, with whom we also pray to have part in the Lord (cf. Jn 13.8).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴¹ Thus Scripture describes each of the persons as the source of the one same life from God.

¹⁴² ἐνεργούμενη, passive participle: the communication of the 'life' coming from God through the Son is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, 'the Lord, the giver of life', in the Constantinopolitan additions to the Nicene Creed.

¹⁴³ Gregory is echoing Basil's formulations, cf. Letter 159.2.

¹⁴⁴ μίαν ἀρχὴν.

¹⁴⁵ I.e. the Father as the ἀρχή, principle, the *fons et origo* of the Trinity.

¹⁴⁶ The allusion is to Jesus' response to Peter's refusal to be *washed* by him. The meaning is that only if we are baptized into, believe in and worship the Trinity as handed down by the Lord, shall we have 'part' in him, and so also with those of like mind/faith.

LETTER 6 TO BISHOP ABLABIUS¹⁴⁷

That the inscription rightly accords the term *bishop* to the addressee is confirmed at **6.11** by Gregory's use of the address 'your holiness'. Cf. **letter 21**, *To Ablabius the Bishop* and the introductory note, though it is uncertain whether the Ablabius here can be identified with the sophist Ablabius there. Gregory also wrote the small treatise-letter *That there are not three gods* to a certain Ablabius. Gregory Nazianzen's letter 233 and Libanius' letters 839, 935 appear to be written to another Ablabius than the one here.

In this Letter Gregory tells of the triumphant welcome given him on his return home to Nyssa after a long absence. He writes as if he has just enjoyed Ablabius' hospitality during his return journey (**6.1**). The letter might well be dated to mid 378, on Gregory's return to Nyssa after his exile. There were other more or less lengthy absences from his see over the years due to his attendances at councils and his missions on behalf of the greater church, such as his journey to Arabia in 381. It is also possible that this letter describes his return to Nyssa after his enforced sojourn at Sebasteia early in 380, when for a while the people of Nyssa may have thought they had lost their bishop again. But the exceptional exuberance both of joy and of tears demonstrated here seems to reflect the longest and most painful absence of his exile from 376 to 378.

Whatever Gregory's failures as a Church politician on the grand scene, this letter is a wonderful testimony to his lovability as a bishop and pastor among the ordinary people of his flock (**6.6**, **9**). The letter also contains the precious testimony that there was a monastic community in Nyssa, or at least a community of virgins (**6.10**), which gives a context to the likelihood canvassed in the Introduction that Gregory's sister Theosebia was sent by Macrina from Annisa to join him in Nyssa. See the sections from *Was Gregory Married?* to *Early Years as Bishop*, and Gregory Nazianzen's **Letter 197**.

*To Bishop Ablabius*¹⁴⁸

1. The Lord brought us safely through, as might be expected, since we were sent forth by your prayers. Indeed I will recount to you clear evidence of God's favour. **2.** For we had just left the locality of Kelosina¹⁴⁹ behind us¹⁵⁰ when there was a massive build-up of

¹⁴⁷ Mss.: PFV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 34–36; tr.: Letter 3, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 529–530.

¹⁴⁸ Ἀβλάβῳ ἐπισκόπῳ Pasquali; πρὸς Ἀβλάβιον ἐπίσκοπον P; τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀβλαβίῳ F; missing in V.

¹⁴⁹ κηλόσινα τὸ χώραν P; ἡλιος ἦν ἀνὰ τὸ χώραν V. The location has not yet been identified except that it was east of Nyssa.

¹⁵⁰ ἑσπερίῳ PF; ἑσπερίῳ V. Tr.: 'For when the sun was just over the spot which we left behind Earsus', NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 529A.

clouds and the atmosphere changed from clear sky to a deep gloom. Then a cold draught blew from the clouds, falling on our bodies with a drizzle and a dampness and threatening a deluge as never before. To our left there were frequent thunderclaps, alternating with the flashes of lightning that anticipated each thunderclap. All the mountains before, behind and on each side of us, were swathed in clouds. **3.** And over our heads was a small cloud, caught by a strong wind, already swollen with rain. Yet we, as in the Israelite wonder, passed through the midst of the waters on every side of us (cf. Ex 14.22), and completed the journey to Vestena¹⁵¹ without being drenched. Once we had found shelter there and our mules were given rest, the signal was given by God to the sky for the downpour.

4. When we had spent some three or four hours there and had rested sufficiently, again God ended the downpour, and our carriage¹⁵² moved along more briskly than before, as the wheels sped easily through the mud which was just moist and on the surface.

5. Now the road from that point to our little town¹⁵³ passes all along the river,¹⁵⁴ following the water downstream. There are settlements continuously along the banks of the river, by the roadside, with no great distance between them. **6.** With such a succession of habitations, the entire road was full of people, some coming to meet us and others escorting us closely, all mingling their overflowing tears with their delight.

7. There was a light drizzle dampening the air, but a short distance from our little town the cloud overhanging us broke into a stronger downpour, so that our entry was quiet, since no-one perceived our arrival in advance. **8.** But as soon as we entered the portico the carriage struck against the dry pavement. At that, as if by some signalling device, the people suddenly appeared I know not

¹⁵¹ τὴν μέχρις Οὐεστινῆς ὁδὸν ν, . . . Οὐεστινὴν . . . F, Οὐγκανῶν P (but according to Pasquali the plural does not fit the singular ἐν ᾧ, shortly following). Vestena is a local town unknown. It is too much to expect that we have here some form of *Vanota* (= *Venasa*) corrupted through transmission. Nyssa could not have been reached from *Venasa* in a portion of one day. Cf. Letter 20 and notes.

¹⁵² On Gregory's use of a carriage, see Letter 1.7 and 2.13.

¹⁵³ ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν.

¹⁵⁴ Maraval maintains (167, n. 4) that Gregory's route lies along the Halys. He cites in evidence Friedrich Hild, *Die Byzantinische Strassensystem in Kappadokien* (Wien, 1975), 67. But at some stage he must have gone up the tributary river along which Nyssa lay. On the locality of Nyssa, see Introduction, 'Early Years as Bishop' and note.

from where or how. They thronged around us so closely that it was not easy to disembark from the carriage, for we could not find a spare space among them. **9.** But after we had with difficulty persuaded them to allow us a chance to descend and to let our mules pass through, we were pressed on every side by the crowd all around us, so much so that their excessive affection all but made us faint.

10. When we had come within the portico, we saw¹⁵⁵ a stream of fire coursing into the church, for the choir of virgins¹⁵⁶ was processing in line into the entrance of the church carrying tapers of wax in their hands, kindling the whole to a splendour with their blaze. **11.** And when I had entered and had both rejoiced and wept with the people—for I experienced both these from witnessing both passions in the crowd—as soon as I had finished the prayers, I wrote out this letter to your holiness as quickly as possible, under the pressure of thirst, that I might attend to the body only when the letter was done.

LETTER 7 TO HIERIUS THE GOVERNOR¹⁵⁷

The addressee is a governor or magistrate who appear not to be a Christian ('we have a law' **7.1**, stage imagery **7.2**, 'malevolent *daimon*' **7.2** and **7.4**, 'side . . . with us' **7.4**). Pasquali, on p. 36, suggests he may be the Hierius who became prefect in Egypt in 364. But as Maraval points out,¹⁵⁸ he had already been governor of a province in 360 and would be unlikely to revert to a lower station after the exalted role of prefect. This role was almost that of a 'vice-emperor' with jurisdiction over a civil diocese covering several provinces. Maraval goes on to mention another Hierius who became Vicar of Africa in 395, whose career about 380 may well have seen him governor of a province such as Cappadocia.¹⁵⁹ There is also the Hierius to whom Gregory of Nyssa dedicated his book *de infantibus qui praemature abrip-iuntur*, and the Hierius to whom he sent a copy of the *VSM*, according to the inscription in one of the manuscripts.

As part of their general role of social patronage, bishops were frequently called upon to act as advocates with the civil authorities for the afflicted

¹⁵⁵ ὁρῶμεν in the mss., but translating according to sense, i.e. ὁρῶμεν.

¹⁵⁶ Compare the description of Gregory's arrival at Annisa in *VSM* 18.3 (GNO 8.1.387–388 Maraval 192–194). The virgins came out in Gregory's honour but awaited him at the entrance to the church.

¹⁵⁷ Mss.: PFV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 36–37; tr.: Letter 4, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 530.

¹⁵⁸ *Lettres*, 170 n. 1.

¹⁵⁹ These are 'Hierius' 4 and 6 in Jones, Martindale and Morris, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* I, (Cambridge, 1971).

and the disadvantaged. Of this there are many examples in the letters of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen.¹⁶⁰ This is the only surviving letter of Gregory of Nyssa that shows him in such a role, though he must have often had calls to do so. It is a very serious letter to a governor or magistrate pleading for the life of a young man, Synesius, who is being prosecuted on a capital charge. Whatever his deed, it was entirely unintentional and accidental, and this, Gregory pleads, should be enough to pull the governor back from imposing the death sentence.

*To Hierius the governor*¹⁶¹

1. We have a law instructing us to *weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice* (Rom 12.15). But of these two legislations, it seems we are only able to put one into practice. For there is a great scarcity in this world of those who prosper, so that it is not easy to find those with whom to share our blessings, whereas there is a plentiful supply of those in the contrary case.

2. I write this as my introduction because of the sad tragedy which some malign power¹⁶² has been staging among those of longstanding worth. A young man of good lineage named Synesius, not unrelated to me, still in the flush of his youth and scarcely having begun to live, is in grave peril. God alone has power to pluck him from this, and after God, you who are entrusted with the sentence of life and death.

3. An involuntary accident has taken place. And indeed, who voluntarily engages in accidents? But now there are those who are making of this accident an indictment by bringing a capital charge against him. **4.** I for my part will endeavour by private letters to shame them into softening their anger, but I beg your benignity to side with justice and with us, that your benevolence may annul the youth's misfortune, as you seek out every means by which the youth may be freed from danger and so through your alliance defeat the malign power which assails him.

¹⁶⁰ As Maraval points out (*Lettres* 171 n. 2) Basil describes one of the bishop's roles as 'the protector of the people', Letter 28, Def. 1.158–171 at 166–167. See M. Forlin Patrucco, 'Social Patronage and Political Mediation in the Activity of Basil of Caesarea', *Studia Patristica* 17, 1102–1107.

¹⁶¹ ἱερῷ ἡγεμόνι F, (πρὸς) ἡγεμόνα ἱερί(ον) in margin of P, missing in V. Maraval perhaps overtranslates 'préfet' (prefect).

¹⁶² *daimon*, an image readily intelligible to pagans.

5. I have in brief said all that I wanted; but to suggest in detail how the case may be handled correctly is neither mine to say, nor yours to learn from me.

LETTER 8 TO ANTIOCHANUS¹⁶³

Gregory writes this letter to a person of social standing who is accustomed to exercising patronage. It seems he is not a Christian, as the fellowship between Gregory and Antiochianos is established solely in terms of a shared Hellenism. Libanius also addressed his letter 788 to an Antiochanus, but it is uncertain whether he the same as the present addressee. The striving for virtue in **8.2** accords with the pagan philosophical tradition, as, for example, among neoplatonists of the age. Gregory commends his young friend, Alexander, to Antiochanus. At **8.4** is an excellent example of the use of the term 'son' not for a natural son, but for a protégé. Gregory's emphasis on his grey hairs and his age suggests a relatively late dating, from the mid 380s onwards.

*To Antiochanus*¹⁶⁴

1. The one thing for which the king of the Macedonians¹⁶⁵ is especially admired by the wise—for he is admired not so much for his trophies over the Persians or the Indians or for his assertion concerning the Ocean, as for his saying that his treasure was in his friends—in this respect I too will dare to put myself on a level with his marvels. Indeed it will be even more fitting for me to utter such a sentiment, since I am rich in friendships, and in that kind of possession perhaps I surpass even that great man who made this his special boast. 2. For who was such a friend to him as you are to me, who are ever striving against yourself for every form of excellence?

3. No-one surely would ever charge me with flattery for saying this if he looks to my age and to your life: for grey hairs are already past the season for flattery and old age is unsuited for fawning, and in your regard, even if I were of the right season for flattery, such

¹⁶³ Mss.: FV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 37–38; tr.: Letter 5, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 530–31.

¹⁶⁴ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀντιοχίου F, missing in V. Alternatively, the name might be read an adjective of generic reference: 'to an Antiochene'.

¹⁶⁵ I.e. Alexander the Great. The saying about Alexander and friendship that Gregory is about to cite was a feature *exemplum* of the Second Sophistic. See Maraval, 176, n. 2 for examples and bibliography.

praise would not fall under suspicion of flattery, because your life demonstrates your praise more than do words.

4. But inasmuch as it is the mark of those who are nobly wealthy to know how to use what they have, and the best use of possessions is in offering them in common to their friends, and my beloved son Alexander is a friend especially joined to me in all sincerity, be persuaded to show to him my treasure. Indeed, do not only show it to him, but also put it at his disposal to enjoy abundantly, by sponsoring him in those concerns on account of which he has come to you in need of your patronage. **5.** He will tell you all himself. For that is more suitable than my going into details by letter.

LETTER 9 TO STAGIRIUS¹⁶⁶

It is very likely that the addressee of this letter is the same Stagirus who wrote **letter 26** to Gregory and to whom Gregory wrote **letter 27** in reply. Gregory Nazianzen also addressed his letters 165, 166, 188 and 192 to Stagirus, and he speaks about him in letter 190. He was a Cappadocian sophist, i.e. rhetorician, apparently not a Christian, who lived or had an estate a day's journey from Nyssa in a town called Osiana (**26.2c**). It is difficult to suggest a particular date. It was written in the anticipation of an important meeting in the town, but when? It would be attractive to consider it written to an old professional colleague after Gregory moved to Nyssa in 372 as its new bishop, but this is too early in terms of the emergence of a collection of Gregory's letters, and it probably has to be dated after one of his major returns to Nyssa, i.e. in 378 or 380. The occasion is unlikely to be that of a Christian festival, but something of a more public and civic nature in which the presence of as many of the elite as possible is desirable. Perhaps the governor is coming.

*To Stagirus*¹⁶⁷

1. They say that those who stage marvels¹⁶⁸ in the theatres devise some such spectacle as this. They take some myth from a history¹⁶⁹ or one of the ancient narratives as the subject of their presentation and convey the story to the spectators in act. And this is the way they convey the changing events of the story: they don costumes and

¹⁶⁶ Mss.: PFV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 38–39; tr.: Letter 6, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 531.

¹⁶⁷ σταγειρίω F, πρὸς σταγειρίον P, absent in V.

¹⁶⁸ τοὺς θαυματοποιούντας, literally, 'makers of marvels'.

¹⁶⁹ μῦθον ἐξ ἱστορίας.

masks¹⁷⁰ and by means of hangings rig up something like a town over the *orchestra*¹⁷¹ and by the lively mimicry of their actions give the bare scene such an appearance that to those looking on they are a marvel, both those mimicking the incidents of the story, and the hangings—and behold, you have the city!

2. What then do I mean by this tale? Since we need to show what is not a city¹⁷² as though it *were* one to those who are assembling there, be persuaded to become for the moment the colonizer of our city. Only by putting in an appearance here shall you make¹⁷³ the desert-place seem a city. **3.** Now it is no great journey for you, and the favour which you shall confer is very great; for we wish to show ourselves with a more dignified air to those who are assembling, which we shall more likely to do if we are adorned with your splendour than by any other ornament.

LETTER 10 TO OTREIUS BISHOP OF MELITENE¹⁷⁴

The addressee of this letter is a well-documented figure, Otreius, metropolitan of Melitene in Armenia. Otreius was present at the council of Tyana in 367 when the better part of the Homoiousians were persuaded to join the Neo-nicenes (Sozomen 6.12). Basil's Letter 181 to Otreius, written in c. 374, attests that he was one of these Neo-nicene bishops. He was also present at the Council of Constantinople in 381 (Mansi, *Concilia* III, 596D), and such was his standing that he was nominated together with Gregory himself and Helladius of Caesarea as one of the episcopal guarantors of orthodoxy for the Pontic Diocese (*Cod. Theod.* 16.1.3, Sozomen 7.9). Euthymius, the monk-saint of Palestine was entrusted as a child by his mother to Otreius (Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymios* 3).¹⁷⁵

Earlier opinion dated this letter to the period of Gregory's exile (376–8), if not even earlier in Gregory's episcopate. Such was Pasquali's conclusion,¹⁷⁶ after he had considered for a moment that it might be linked to **letters 11 and 12** and the circumstances of early 380. Yet according to **10.4a**, the place of his present domicile has reasonable access to Melitene

¹⁷⁰ πρόσωπα.

¹⁷¹ The space below the stage where the chorus and dancers performed.

¹⁷² Gregory calls Nyssa a *πολίχνη* in 6.5, though he is probably exaggerating its littleness, as he is here. The same letter 6 also shows it with signs of urbanisation.

¹⁷³ παρασκευάσας PF, παρασκευάσω V.

¹⁷⁴ Mss.: PFV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 39–40; tr.: Letter 7, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 531.

¹⁷⁵ Much of this information is summed up in Maraval, 181, n. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Pasquali, *Le Lettere*, 96.

on the Euphrates. This can hardly be Nyssa, at about 13 days distance from Melitene, and Caesarea is also unlikely at 10 days' distance. Sebasteia on the other hand has better credentials, being some four to six days journey along a Roman military road to the eastern frontier. All things considered, the background of **letters 10** and **18**, both to Otreius, are best explained by the circumstances reported in **letter 19**.

On this reckoning then, Gregory wrote the present letter to Otreius in the Spring of 380 in a period of despondency due to his enforced detainment at Sebasteia. The present letter, however, in which he rejoices at the news of an impending visit from Otreius, seems to have been written *after letter 18*, in which Gregory is simply glad to receive a letter from him. Gregory wrote his canonical letter on Penance, **letter 31**, to Otreius' successor at Melitene, Letoius. Unfortunately that letter has lost its introduction. It very probably referred to Letoius' estimable predecessor and Gregory's friend, Otreius.

*To Otreius, Bishop of Melitene*¹⁷⁷

1a. What flower of spring so bright, what voices of the song-birds so sweet, what breezes so light and mild that dapple the tranquil sea, what cornfield so gratifying to the farmer—whether erect with green blades or nodding with fruit-laden ears, what gift of the grapevine so abundant as it sways in the air and overshadows the trellis with its leaves,¹⁷⁸ **1b.** are like the spiritual Spring born of your peaceful beams that has illumined our life and cheered our despondency?

2. Amid such blessings, it will perhaps be fitting for us to voice the prophetic word: *When the sorrows of my heart were many, the consolations of God*—through your goodness—*cheered our soul* like the rays of the sun (Ps 93.19), warming our life cowed beneath the frost.¹⁷⁹ For both reached the highest peak together—I mean the harshness of my griefs and the sweetness of your blessings. **3.** If merely the good news of your coming has cheered us so much that everything was transformed for us from sharpest pain to a cheerful state, what then will the mere sight of your precious and gracious coming accomplish? How great will be the consolation that the sweet sound of your voice in our ears will give to our soul! (cf. Lk 1.44) **4a.** May this speedily come to pass, with God as our co-worker, who *revives the fainthearted, and gives respite to the afflicted* (Is 57.15).

¹⁷⁷ Ὁτρήϊφ ἐπισκόπῳ Μελιτηνῆς F, ὀτρεῖφ ἐπισκόπῳ P, absent in V.

¹⁷⁸ 'what gift . . . leaves' missing in FV and recovered from P.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Homer *Odyssey* 7.137.

But know that when we consider our own case we are very distressed at the present state of affairs and our affliction has no end. **4b.** But when we turn our eyes to your reverence, we confess the great grace in the Master's dispensation, because we are able to enjoy, thanks to the proximity,¹⁸⁰ your sweet and good disposition, and feast at will on such nourishment to satiety, if there can be any satiety of such blessings.

LETTER 11 TO EUPATRIUS THE SCHOLASTICUS¹⁸¹

Pasquali suggests (41) that the addressee is a son of the same name of that 'Eupaterios' (sic) to whom Basil addressed his letter 159. Yet Basil's addressees there, Eupaterios and his daughter, are clearly committed Christians vitally interested in theological issues. The Eupatrius of this letter on the contrary, if he is a Christian, is very barely so, perhaps no more than a nominal catechumen. Gregory begins by pointedly drawing attention to his addressee's lack of familiarity or interest in the Scriptures because he is besotted with Hellenism instead. He gently prods Eupatrius as to this fact and that he really should be aspiring to something more, i.e. be rekindling his latent, neglected Christianity. Eupatrius' profession is that of a 'scholasticus', i.e. a kind of legal officer in the imperial service. He has written to Gregory 'from Cappadocia', which may be taken as a figure for the metropolis, Caesarea.¹⁸² From **11.3** it appears that Pontus is his homeland, or at least that is where his father is resident, so that Eupatrius' present circumstances are not unlike Gregory's in his early days as a rhetorician in Caesarea. Yet compare **12.5**. Gregory's insists on his 'old age', which might mean from the mid 380s and after. There is of course a certain paradox in Gregory's wish to wean his correspondent from too great a love of Hellenic culture, which was the course he himself had taken in his early adulthood. It is all the more likely then that this letter comes from late in Gregory's life. He probably writes from Nyssa.

*To Eupatrius the scholasticus*¹⁸³

1. Seeking, as is my custom, some fitting and appropriate introduction to place at the head of my letter—I mean of course from

¹⁸⁰ ἐκ γειτόνων.

¹⁸¹ Mss.: FV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 41–42; tr.: Letter 8, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 531–2.

¹⁸² Pasquali, *Le Lettere* p. 95, n. 5, explains that the custom of substituting the name of the province for that of the capital is frequent in ecclesiastical literature of the period, giving examples, e.g. *Anatole* (the East) or *Oriens*, for Antioch.

¹⁸³ Εὐπατρίῳ σχολαστικῷ F, absent in V.

passages of the Scriptures¹⁸⁴—I was at a loss what to use, not because I could not find anything suitable, but because I considered it superfluous to write such things to those who know nothing about them. In short, your zeal for extern literature¹⁸⁵ was proof for us of your lack of interest in the divine lessons.

Hence I will pass over texts of this sort in silence and employ for my introduction the kind adapted to your eloquence. **2.** One such is furnished by the preceptor of your culture¹⁸⁶ in the merriment of an elder who after long affliction beholds with his eyes his own son, and his son's son too.¹⁸⁷ And the subject of his merriment is the rivalry between Odysseus and Telemachus for the first prize in valour. **3.** What then does this recollection of the Cephallenians¹⁸⁸ have to contribute to the purpose of my discourse? It is because when both you and your wholly admirable father welcomed me, as they did Laertes,¹⁸⁹ you contended in honourable rivalry for the first prize in showing us respect and kindness, pelting¹⁹⁰ me with your letters, he from Pontus and you from Cappadocia.¹⁹¹

4. What, then, of me the old man? I count it a most happy day when I see such rivalry between father and son! **5.** May you therefore never cease from accomplishing the just wish of an excellent and admirable father and surpass your father's renown by still greater excellences. I shall be a judge favourable to both of you, awarding to you the first prize against your father, and the same to your father against you. **6.** And we shall bear with rough Ithaca,¹⁹² rough not so much because of stones as of the behaviour of its inhabitants, for there are many suitors in it who are the devourers of the possessions

¹⁸⁴ An interesting comment, since Gregory's surviving letters by no means attest a custom of beginning with scriptural passages. Only Letters 7 and 17 can be cited. It begs questions of the selection of letters that have survived. See Introduction, 'Letters'.

¹⁸⁵ περὶ τοὺς ἔξωθεν λόγους, lit., 'the words from without', literature of the non-Christian, pagan canon.

¹⁸⁶ παρὰ τῷ διδασκάλῳ τῆς ὑμετέρας παιδείσεως. Homer is meant, since study of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was the foundation of a traditional Hellenic education.

¹⁸⁷ I.e., Laertes, and his son, Odysseus, and grandson, Telemachus; Homer, *Odyssey* 24.514–515.

¹⁸⁸ Homer, *Odyssey* 24.377–378.

¹⁸⁹ Λαέρτης F, τις (one, someone) V. Thus the analogy is: Laertes is Gregory, Odysseus is Eutropius' father, and Telemachus is Eutropius.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Odysseus' and Telemachus' shooting of arrows, *Odyssey* 22.105–118.

¹⁹¹ See also Letter 12.5.

¹⁹² Homer, *Odyssey* 10.27, 11.417, 463, 14.242.

of the one whom they woo, insulting the bride by the very fact that they threaten the chaste woman with marriage,¹⁹³ acting in a way worthy of a Melantho,¹⁹⁴ I think, or some other such person, for there is no-one anywhere to bring them to their senses with his bow.

7. You see how we babble on about matters which are not at all fitting for the elderly! But may I receive ready forbearance on account of my grey hairs; for prattling is as characteristic of old age as it is blariness for the eyes, or the slowing down of all the limbs though the stiffness of old age. **8.** But you, by entertaining us in youthful fashion with your brisk and sprightly language shall restore youth to our old age, supporting the feebleness of our length of days by this beautiful care for the aged which so well becomes you.

LETTER 12 TO THE SAME¹⁹⁵

This letter follows the previous one in the two manuscripts. The advice of the better manuscript is that it was sent to the same addressee. Yet the internal evidence is against it. A very obvious difference between the letters is the manifestly Christian status of the addressee here, compared to the addressee of **letter 11**. The tone is also markedly different in the two letters. It is precisely because of this that Maraval, 190, n. 1, doubts that they were written to the same person at all. He reads the 'your friendliness' in **12.2** as a title of address, unsuitable for anyone much younger than Gregory, and remarks the contrasting tone of the two letters. The possibility that the present addressee might be the *father* of the Eupatrius of **letter 11**—raised by Pasquali in *Le Lettere* 94, n. 4, but dismissed—should perhaps be reconsidered.

Moreover, Gregory's personal situation detailed in **12.3** must mean something. Nyssa hardly seems to be indicated, specially if the description in

¹⁹³ τῷ ἐπαπειλεῖν τὸν γάμον τῇ σωφρόσυνῃ. Maraval translates in a slightly different sense: 'qu'ils menacent la chasteté du mariage'. Pasquali, 92–95, characteristically understands Gregory's imagery as a metaphor for a state of the church (= bride) and relates it to the church in Sebasteia in 380 awaiting a true bridegroom (= bishop). However, Maraval (188, n. 1) prefers to take the meaning literally, as if Gregory is referring here to a partially christianised populace in Nyssa, in which old practices of marriage by abduction (often connected with financial manipulations), and marriage for financial gain are still too painfully current. Bishops in such cases often acted as the advocate of the wronged woman. Gregory Nazianzen gives an example in Basil's life as bishop, *Or.* 43.56. Basil himself deals with abduction in his letters on canonical penance, Letter 199.22.

¹⁹⁴ One of Penelope's handmaids, who heaped abuse on Odysseus on his return home (in disguise), for which she was later hanged: *Odyssey* 18.321–336, 19.65–69. Gregory uses her as a figure for a vicious use of the tongue.

¹⁹⁵ Mss.: FV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 42–44; tr.: Letter 9, PPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 532–3.

18.5 is compared. It seems more likely then that Gregory is writing from Sebasteia in the very early Spring of the year 380, in the same distressing circumstances as told in **19.14–18**.

Gregory borrows the imagery of that season to give shape to the whole letter, which is couched in terms of a play between Winter and Spring. The last paragraph means that the coming of Spring is even more desirable to him because his friend's journey to visit him will then be easier. He proposes the 'great holy day' in springtime, i.e. the festival of Easter, as a suitable occasion.

*To the same*¹⁹⁶

1. The loveliness of Spring does not shine forth all at once. First there is a prelude to the season, when the sunbeam gently warms both the earth's frozen surface and the half-visible bud hidden in the node, and the breezes blow over the earth so that that the generative and life-giving power of the air deeply penetrates it. Then the fresh shoots of grass can be seen, and the return of the birds which winter had exiled, and many such things. These however are the signs of Spring, rather than the Spring itself—not but that they are sweet, because they are the harbingers of what is sweetest of all.

2. What then does my discourse mean? Just as the friendliness¹⁹⁷ in your letter came to us as a forerunner of the treasures within you, and, like a beautiful prelude announced to us what might be expected in you, we both welcome the grace in this letter like some first-appearing flower of spring and pray that we may soon experience the full season in yourself.

3a. For we would have you know that we have been cruelly, cruelly oppressed by the coldness and bitterness of the people here and their ways. Just as ice forms in the cottages if water seeps in—for I will use an example from our regions—and so the low-lying dampness, when it spreads over the frozen surface, hardens over the ice and adds to its mass, **3b.** something like this I see in the character of many of those who dwell in these parts. They are always plotting and inventing something spiteful. A fresh mischief hardens on top of what has already been perpetrated, and then another on top of that, and another again, and so it goes on without cease. There

¹⁹⁶ τῷ αὐτῷ in margin F, absent in V.

¹⁹⁷ ἡ διὰ τῶν γραμματῶν σου φιλοφρόσυνη πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐλθοῦσα, kindness, goodwill, benevolence.

is no limit to their hatred and to the proliferation of their vicious deeds. So we have need of many prayers that the grace of the Spirit may soon breathe over them and thaw the bitterness of their hatred and melt the ice that hardens upon them through their malice.

4. For this reason the Spring, sweet as it is by nature, becomes more desirable than itself for those who expect you after such storms.

5. Therefore do not let the favour be slow in coming, especially since our great holy day approaches and it would be more blessed that the land which bore you should be honoured by her own than that Pontus should by ours.¹⁹⁸ Come then, dear head, bring us a multitude of blessings, your very self, for this is what will fill up the measure of our blessings.

LETTER 13 TO LIBANIUS¹⁹⁹

This letter is written to an illustrious sophist who is not a Christian. F identifies him as Libanius, the famous master of rhetorical studies at Antioch, though no letter of Libanius to Gregory of Nyssa appears in the Libanian corpus. The situation revealed in the letter is that Cynegius, Gregory's 'son', either his natural son or a young protégé, was sent for training to Libanius, who in turn sent back a letter to Gregory with the lad on one of his return trips home to Cappadocia. Gregory here seems to be in the position of his correspondent Ablabius in **letter 21**: someone receiving a son/student *home*.

The present letter is Gregory's reply to Libanius. Gregory modestly but candidly avows his allegiance to Christian masters. The list of griefs mentioned by Gregory (**13.2**) evidently followed a visit to Antioch where Gregory was able to meet Libanius. The distressing events reported in **letter 19** are surely implied—in which case the present letter may be dated no earlier than late 380, after Gregory's return to Nyssa from captivity in Sebasteia.

On the question whether Cynegius was Gregory's natural son, it is worth mentioning that Gregory also calls Alexander 'my son' in letter 8.4, and Diogenes/Basil likewise in letter 21.2, and they were not his natural sons, but lads enjoying his patronage. Gregory Nazianzen for his part very freely named his protégés 'my son', often with added terms of endearment—and none were his sons in the flesh.²⁰⁰ And yet Gregory of Nyssa did marry

¹⁹⁸ This seems to mean that it is better that Eupatrius (senior?) comes to his homeland to visit Gregory, whether that is Armenia Minor (Sebasteia) or Cappadocia (Nyssa), depending on the place in which Gregory is writing, than that Gregory should go to see Eupatrius in Pontus, his own homeland.

¹⁹⁹ Mss.: FV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 44–46; tr.: Letter 10, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 533.

²⁰⁰ A few examples: letters 13.3, 21.3, 22.3 ('my most precious son Amphilocheus'),

and the possibility remains that Cynegius *was* his natural son. See the Introduction, ‘Was Gregory married?’ and ‘Gregory’s marriage: a scenario’.

13.4 preserves the vital testimony that Gregory for a short time studied rhetoric under his brother Basil. However Gregory’s self-deprecation here in respect of his own rhetorical skills are not to be taken at face value. He was highly trained in rhetoric and practised successfully as a rhetorician in Caesarea for some eight years. For a while Gregory had even been a professional colleague of Libanius. Now in this letter (**13.2, 5**) we learn that the greatest master of the age has himself commended Gregory’s abilities. This praise coming from such a man brings Gregory the keenest delight which he struggles to temper with a decent modesty. For more on Gregory’s rhetorical powers see the Introduction: ‘Rhetoric and style in Gregory’s letters’.

*To Libanius*²⁰¹

1. I once heard a physician tell of a surprising reversal of nature.²⁰² And this was his story. Someone was laid low, he said, with one of the more intractable illnesses. He began to blame the medical art for being able to do less than it professed, for nothing that was devised for his cure had any effect. Then some good news was brought him exceeding all his hopes, and it was this happy chance

23.3, 41.8 (where Gregory senior calls Basil ‘our most God-beloved son’), 43.3 (Gregory Senior again), 83.3, 126.3, 127.2, 144.4, 151.1 (‘my very precious son George’), 157.2, 167.1 (Nicoboulus our very dear son), 188.2 (‘our sweetest son Nicoboulus’), 199.4, 209.1.

²⁰¹ Αἰβανίω F, absent in V.

²⁰² Gregory was well informed in the best of contemporary medicine and esteemed the profession highly. See his comments in letter 33.1a. In his youth at the council of Constantinople in 360, he listened attentively to Basil of Ancyra, a trained physician whose medical expertise informed his ascetic doctrine (See Introduction ‘Young Adulthood’ and note, *Contra Eunomium* 1.9, *On Virginity* 22). For Gregory the practice of medicine provided many comparisons with the healing of the soul (letter 31.1d). But this attitude was shared with all his siblings. Without a doubt study of medicine formed part of the higher curriculum pursued by the brothers. Gregory Nazianzen informs us in *Oration* 43.23 attests that Basil attained to a mastery of the art in both theory and practise. The analogy of the bodily physician / spiritual physician is a mainstay of his ascetic writings. See his long matured statement on the Christian approach to medicine in *Longer Responses* 55. Medical literacy was part of the culture of the entire family. In the VSM 33.4 (GNO 8.1.404–406, Maraval 242–246) Emmelia urges her daughter to see a physician ‘for this art, too, was sent by God for the saving of human beings’. In *On the Soul and the Resurrection* we learn that a physician was by Macrina’s bedside during her dying days, and she uses his attentiveness to her bodily condition as an occasion to comment on spiritual healing. Even in the one scrap of writing we have from Peter, letter 30, we have an analogy drawn from a medically informed mind (30.5).

that did the work of the art, freeing the man from his disease. Whether the soul, through the alleviation of its anxiety, disposed the body to be in the same state as itself, or whether it was some other reason, I cannot say, for I have no leisure to philosophise over such things, and he who told me did not enlarge on the subject.

2. But I think it timely that I have just recalled this story. For when I was in a condition other than I would wish—I do not need now to list precisely the causes of all the griefs which befell me from the time I was with you till the present—someone unexpectedly told me of the letter which had arrived from your unparalleled erudition. As soon as we received the missive and perused what you had written, my soul was affected immediately as if I had been proclaimed before all the world for the noblest achievements, so highly did we value the testimony with which you favoured us in your letter. My bodily condition then began to change immediately for the better, and I can relate to you the same marvel as the story above, for as I read one part of the letter I was ailing, and in perfect health as I read the other.

3. So much for these matters. But now that my son²⁰³ Cynegius has become the occasion of this favour to me, and since you are able, through your outstanding ability to do good, to benefit not only us but also our benefactors, he is our benefactor, because, as we said, he became the cause and occasion of our receiving a letter from you, and for this reason he deserves well.

4. But if you ask who are our teachers—if indeed we are thought to have learned anything from them—you will find that they are Paul and John and the other Apostles and Prophets—if we are not too bold to claim the teaching of such men. But if you speak of your wisdom, which those competent to judge say streams down from you and is imparted to all who have some share of eloquence—for this is what I heard him say to all who was your disciple and my father and teacher, the admirable Basil—know that I found no munificent supply in the instructions of my teachers,²⁰⁴ since I was

²⁰³ υἱὸς F, absent in V. English requires a possessive here; a singular possessive is chosen because of the proximity of μοι ('to me').

²⁰⁴ The plural seems to refer to Basil, and behind him, Libanius. This is the only independent testimony, apart from the much disputed correspondence between Basil and Libanius, that the former had at some stage been the latter's pupil. But just as Gregory spent only a short time under Basil's tutelage, so Basil could not have

apprenticed to my brother²⁰⁵ only a short time and was only sufficiently purified by his divine tongue to be able to discern the deficiency of those uninitiated into discourse. Nevertheless, with regard to what is yours, whenever I had leisure I devoted myself assiduously to the whole course of study, and became enamoured of the beauty that is yours, though I never attained the object of my desire.²⁰⁶

5. If, then, as I myself judge, what is ours who never had a teacher is nothing,²⁰⁷ and if it is not allowable that your opinion of us be other than true—that the discourse of some, even of ourself, is, at least in your judgment not contemptible—allow us to presume to attribute to you the cause of our attainments. 6. For if our proficiency in discourse was from Basil, and if his wealth came from your treasures, then we have acquired what is yours even if we received it through others. But if our attainments are few, so is the water in a jar—yet nevertheless it comes from the Nile.²⁰⁸

LETTER 14 TO LIBANIUS THE SOPHIST²⁰⁹

This letter is addressed as is the previous letter, to the great Libanius. Cynegius, the same son/protégé of Gregory and a student of the famous sophist, is mentioned in both letters. In **14.9** Gregory authorizes Libanius to use constraint if the lad shows himself lazy in his studies. It may be that at the time of this letter Cynegius was at an early stage of his studies,

spent much time as Libanius' student. The only available period seems to be 349 when both Basil and Libanius may have been in Constantinople. Thereafter Basil moved to Athens for his studies, where the most prominent of his teachers in rhetoric was Prohaeresius.

²⁰⁵ ἐπ' ὀλίγον τῷ ἀδελφῷ συγγεγονότα, i.e. for formal instruction in rhetoric. The appropriate period seems to be mid/late 356, after Basil's return from Athens. He spent a few months teaching rhetoric in Caesarea (where Gregory was a student) before he returned to Annisa in Pontus where, under Macrina's influence, he resolved to pursue the ascetic life.

²⁰⁶ Again, Gregory uses the erotic language familiar in traditional Hellenism. Maraval accepts an amendment to the text proposed by Müller: ἀποτυχεῖν δὲ μηδέπω τοῦ ἔρωτος = 'and I have never forsaken that desire'; however the text as it stands seems more in keeping with the tone of self-deprecation Gregory expresses in the remainder of the letter.

²⁰⁷ Gregory is affecting modesty. In fact, he always strove to produce a Greek style worthy of the best traditions of the Second Sophistic, and this he achieved in no mean degree.

²⁰⁸ As Maraval remarks (*Lettres* 201 n. 3) the water of the Nile was reputed to have medicinal properties. Gregory's phrase has a proverbial ring about it.

²⁰⁹ Mss.: FV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 46–48; tr.: Letter 11, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 533–4.

whereas **letter 13** shows him a later stage, during one of his periodic visits home. As may be inferred from **letter 13.2**, Gregory had personally met Libanius during his attendance at the council in Antioch during 379, where perhaps Gregory had broached Cynegius' potential candidacy as a student of the master.

The letter is valuable for showing that Gregory was well aware of the beginning of the Roman year on 1 January. According to **14.1–2**, Gregory received the second letter from Libanius on 1st January, while he was in Caesarea. It seems to have been the very day he delivered his *Funeral Oration on Basil*, in which case he wrote this letter some time in January 381.

*To Libanius the sophist*²¹⁰

1. There is a custom among the Romans of celebrating a festival about the Winter solstice after the manner of their ancestors. It is when the sun begins again to climb to the upper region and the length of the days begins to increase. The beginning of the month is reckoned sacred, and during this day they inaugurate the entire year, devoting themselves to happy chances, festivities, and purchases.²¹¹

2. What do I mean by beginning my letter in this way? It is because I too have observed this festival, having received like them a golden gift.²¹² For on that occasion there came also into my hands gold—not like the vulgar gold which rulers love and those who have it give, that heavy, tainted, and soulless possession—but that which is loftier than all wealth to those who have intelligence, the noblest pledge, as Pindar says.²¹³ I speak of your letter and the great riches it contains.

²¹⁰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Λιβανίου σοφιστῆ F, absent in V.

²¹¹ Pasquali emends πόρους ('purchases') to πότους ('drinking bouts'), citing Libanius' use of the word in *Or.* 9.6, in which he also discusses this civic festival, and in *Or.* 8. Gregory would appear to have read both or at least one of these texts, and endeavours to honour Libanius by the allusion. Maraval however maintains the text of the mss., but glosses his translation as 'acquisitions de bon augure' = 'acquisitions of good omen', understanding that Gregory's himself may have made the subtle change in reference to own fortunate acquisition of Libanius' letter.

²¹² 'The custom of New Year's gifts (*strenarum commercium*) had been discontinued by Tiberius, because of the trouble it involved to himself, and abolished by Claudius: but in these times it had been revived. We find mention of it in the reigns of Theodosius, and of Arcadius; Ausonius *Ep.* xviii. 4; Symmachus *Ep.* x. 28', NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 533, n. 1.

²¹³ Pindar, *Olympian Ode* 1.1 ὁ δε χρυσὸς, αἰθόμενον πῦρ ἅτε διαπρέπει νυκτὸς μεγάλανόφορος ἔξοχα πλούτου. However Pasquali and Maraval say that Gregory has made a mistake in his attribution, for the reference is in fact to Euripides, fragment 326.

3. For it so happened that on that day, as I was visiting the metropolis of the Cappadocians, I met one of my acquaintances who handed me this gift, your letter, as a feast-day present. **4.** I was overjoyed at this good fortune and threw open my gain to all who were present. All shared in it, each eagerly acquiring the whole of it, while I was none the worse off. For the letter, as it passed through the hands of all became the private wealth of each, some by memorizing the words through repeated reading, others by taking a copy of them upon tablets. So it returned to my hands, affording me more joy than does the metal to the eyes of those rich in gold. **5.** Since even with farmers—to use a homely comparison—approval of the labours they have already performed is a great incentive to further labours, bear with us if we treat what you yourself have given as a deposit, and on this account write so that we may stir you to write back.

6. But I beg this benefit from you for the common life: that you will not contemplate any longer what you threatened to us in dark hints at the end of your letter. For I do not consider it a fair judgment, that if some err by deserting the Greek language for the barbarian,²¹⁴ becoming mercenary soldiers and choosing a soldier's rations instead of the renown of eloquence—you should therefore condemn eloquence and sentence us to an inarticulate life. For who will utter anything if you carry out this severe threat against eloquence?

7. But perhaps it will be well to remind you of a passage in our Scriptures. For our Word bids those who are capable of doing good not to look to the dispositions of those whom they are benefiting, as if to be generous only to those sensible of the favour and withhold our good deeds from the ungrateful, but to imitate the dispenser of all things who gives a share of the good things of his

²¹⁴ The reference is to Latin. Libanius often complained in his letters of the young who quit the schools of rhetoric for the law schools at Beirut or Rome, which necessitated the study of Latin, seeking ultimately a career in law or higher imperial administration. Gregory indulges Libanius' polemic by likening this course to that of mercenary soldiers. Contrast one of Gregory's heroes and spiritual ancestors, Gregory Thaumaturgus, who in the 3rd century travelled to Beirut for legal studies. In his *Panegyric to Origen* (PG 10.1053A) he describes Latin as 'the Roman tongue, which is a wonderful and magnificent sort of language, and one most aptly conformable to royal authority, but still difficult to me'. Maraval gives contemporary examples of abandoning rhetoric for more practical career training (204 n. 2). Aubineau, *Traite de Virginité*, p. 76 also mentions that the tachygraphy was often chosen over rhetorical studies, with a view to employment in government chanceries.

creation to all alike, to the good and those who are not such (cf. Mt 5.43–45). **8.** In heeding this counsel, admirable sir,²¹⁵ show yourself always to be in your life as the time past has shown you to be. For those who do not see the sun do not thereby hinder the sun's existence. Even so it is not right that the rays of your eloquence should be dimmed because of those whose who are shut to the senses of the soul.

9. But as for Cynegius, I pray that he may be as far as possible from the common disease which has seized upon young men these days, and that he will devote himself of his own accord to the study of rhetoric.²¹⁶ But if he is otherwise disposed, it is only right that he should be put under constraint, even if he is unwilling, that he might avoid²¹⁷ the pitiful and discreditable plight in which they are sunk today who once withdrew from rhetorical study.

LETTER 15 TO JOHN AND MAXIMIAN²¹⁸

The following is a covering letter sent with a copy of *Contra Eunomium* I to two young Christian students of 'the sophist', who appears to be Libanius. In that case they are bringing a copy of Gregory's book with them as they return to Antioch for their studies. The John addressed here may also be the addressee of Libanius' Letter 1576. In sending them a copy of the first book (or strictly first two books) of his refutation of Eunomius, Gregory hopes to inspire in these young Christian students of rhetoric a zeal for defending authentic doctrine. But he wants them to read certain definite parts to their esteemed teacher. Perhaps he feels need of reassurance for his use of invective (see his anxieties on this score in **letter 29.4–5**), perhaps he hopes the dogmatic arguments might even exercise some Christian persuasion over the great sophist. The letter may be dated to c. 382 or perhaps the Spring of 383, some time after Gregory had completed *Contra Eunomium* I.

²¹⁵ ὁ θαυμάσειε, Gregory uses the courtesies of the Platonic dialogues.

²¹⁶ How greatly this contrasts with the enthusiasm for Hellenism in mid 360s stirred up by Julian, in which Gregory himself fully shared.

²¹⁷ There is some disturbance of the text here. Pasquali marks a lacuna; he reports Wilamowitz' opinion that some house of correction for delinquents is to be understood.

²¹⁸ Mss.: FV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 48–49; tr.: Letter 12, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 534–5 which uses the title of F, 'On his work against Eunomius', properly referring to the following letter.

*To John and Maximian*²¹⁹

1. We Cappadocians are poor in almost all the things that make those who possess them happy—and poor especially in those able to write.²²⁰ 2. This indeed is the reason for the long delay of my treatise, for though my refutation of the heresy²²¹ has been finished for some considerable time, there was no one to transcribe it. It was this lack of copyists that in all likelihood brought on us the suspicion of slackness or of inadequacy for the task.

3. But now that by God's grace the copyist and proof-reader of the texts²²² have been found, I have sent the treatise on to you—not, as Isocrates says,²²³ as a gift, for I do not reckon that there is anything in it that it might be a prize to one who receives it, but as an invitation from us meant to hearten those who are in the full vigour of youth to do battle with our adversaries, through stirring up the boldness of youth by the eagerness of old age.

4. But if any part of the treatise appears worthy of the ear of the sophist, choose certain passages, especially those before the debates, and take to him specimens of choice style. Perhaps also some of the dogmatic parts will not appear to you interpreted without grace. But whatever you do read, be sure that you read it as to a teacher and an expert.

LETTER 16 TO STRATEGIUS²²⁴

In c. 375 a presbyter, Strategius, acted as a trusted courier for many of Basil's letters (See Basil, letters 244, 245, 250). Gregory Nazianzen's letter 169 is also addressed to a Strategius who seems to be resident in Constantinople. It is difficult to say which of these two men, if either, may be the

²¹⁹ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἰὼ καὶ μαξιμιανῶ F, absent in V.

²²⁰ Basil also remarks his lack of available scribes in Letters 134, Def. 2.304–307 (according to which he has even resorted to training them—see Letter 334), and 135 Def. 2.307–311 ('... as yet I am not provided with any fast copyist. For to such a state of poverty has the once envied condition of the Cappadocians come!').

²²¹ Gregory refers to his lengthy *Contra Eunomium*, rather than his much briefer *Antirhetic against Apollinaris*, which would not have taken long to transcribe.

²²² ὅτε γράφων καὶ ὁ δοκιμάζων τὰ γεγραμμένα. Alternatively with Maraval, *Lettres* 209, n. 4, these terms might be taken to mean a tachygrapher who takes down the text from dictation, and a calligrapher.

²²³ Isocrates, *Oratio ad Demonicum* 2.

²²⁴ Mss.: FV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 49–50; tr.: the concluding part of Letter 12, NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 535.

addressee of this letter. Gregory at any rate sent this letter in reply to a letter in which his correspondent has told him of his own difficulties, noted Gregory's own difficulties ('spectacle of our affairs' **16.4**) and expressed his general despondency. The letter may belong to the period of Gregory's incarceration in Sebasteia in early 380 (**letter 19**), but another and perhaps more likely setting is that of the tension between himself and Helladius of Caesarea (**letters 1, 17**). A date later in the 380s when dealings had all but irretrievably broken down would fit the kind of despondency revealed in **16.2a**, and **3**. Strategius may have been taken aback by the animosity Helladius shows to Gregory personally and perhaps to anyone connected with his predecessor's circle. One gains the impression that Gregory in writing to encourage Strategius is being quietly and courteously brave amidst severe trials of his own.

To Strategius

1a. Those who play ball go about it in some such way such as this.²²⁵ Standing apart in three places, two of them take accurate aim and toss the ball one to the other, each catching it in turn from the other, while they bluff the player in the middle who is jumping up at it. By turning the face in a certain direction, and with a certain movement of the hand to the right or the left they make a show of throwing. But whatever direction they see him scurrying, they throw it to the other side instead, thwarting his expectation with a trick.

1b. This holds true even now for many of us when we refuse to be genuine and casually play ball with human beings. So instead of their hope of the right hand²²⁶ that we dangle before them, we brush aside the souls of those who hope in us through the left-handedness of what we actually do.²²⁷ **2a.** Letters of reconciliation, kindly greetings, tokens, gifts, affectionate embraces by letter—these are making a show of throwing the ball to the right. But instead of the good cheer one hoped for from all this, one finds accusations, plots, slanders, reproaches, charges and bits of phrases torn out of context.²²⁸

2b. You are blessed in your hopes, you who maintain your confidence towards God through all such trials. **3.** But do not to

²²⁵ 'i.e. the game of φανίδα, called also ἐφετίδα by Hesychius', *ibid.* 535, n. 5.

²²⁶ τῆς δεξιᾶς ἐλπίδος, literally 'right-hand hope'. 'Right' and 'left' are now being used metaphorically for 'favourable' and 'sinister'.

²²⁷ τῇ σκαιότητι τῶν γινόμενων . . . παρακρούμενοι.

²²⁸ μονομερῶν ἀποφάσεων ὑφαρπαγαί, lit. 'filchings of isolated bits out of context.'

look to our words, we beg you, but to the Lord's teaching in the Gospel—for what consolation can he be to another in pain who is overcome by his own pains?—so that difficulties will find their own issue²²⁹ (cf. 1 Cor 10:13), as he says, *Retribution is mine, I will repay, says the Lord* (Rom 12:19, Dt 32:35).

4. But do you, O best of men, act in a way worthy of yourself. Put your hope in God and do not let the spectacle of our affairs retard you in your progress toward the beautiful and the good. Entrust the fitting and just outcome²³⁰ of your affairs (cf. 1 Cor 10:13) to God the just judge and act as the Divine wisdom directs you. **5.** For surely Joseph did not despond at the envy of his brothers, since the malice of his siblings (cf. Gen 50:20) became for him the road to kingship.

LETTER 17 TO THE PRESBYTERS OF NICOMEDIA²³¹

This letter is a stirring invocation of the qualities to be looked for in a true Christian bishop. Gregory fervently exhorts the presbyterate of Nicomedia to keep certain important desiderata in mind when considering a successor to their bishop Patricius. He speaks from long experience of the strife in the churches, and of unsavoury episcopal politics that sometimes have affected him deeply (See **letters 1, 3, 16** and **19** especially). Compare the story of Gregory Thaumaturgus who corrected unworthy motives for choosing a new bishop of Comana in *The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus*.²³² It is notable that in this letter hellenism and philosophy retire before a thorough immersion in Scripture and an intensely Christian discourse. Gregory writes in the style of an apostolic pastoral letter, although not without a trademark hint of Platonist thought (**17.7**).

For the broader political background to the letter, see the prefatory notes to Letter 1. The more immediate background to this letter is persuasively outlined by Maraval.²³³ Sozomen, 8.6, and Photius, *Bibl. cod.* 59, mention a certain Gerontius, a man of eloquence and a gifted physician in high demand, who was also a deacon in the church of Milan under St Ambrose.

²²⁹ ὡς ἂν τὴν ἰδίαν διέξοδον λάβῃ τὰ πράγματα—reading neuter plural πράγματα as subject of λάβῃ. There may be an allusion here to 1 Cor 10:13, as there certainly is shortly. In that case the text from Rom 12:19 may be a later insertion, not entirely fitting with the drift of Gregory's thought. In any case, Gregory is using scripture allusively since neither is a dominical saying from the Gospel.

²³⁰ δικαίαν τῶν πραγμάτων ἀπόβασιν—the actual word used in 1 Cor 10:13.

²³¹ Mss: FV; ed. GNO 8.2, 51–58; tr. NPNF ser. 2, vol. 5, 535–538.

²³² GNO 10.1, 36–40.

²³³ *Lettres*, pp. 39–41.

Disciplined by Ambrose for an episode of very peculiar behaviour, he decamped to Constantinople, where he built up a network of influential friends. Sozomen relates that he was ordained bishop of Nicomedia by none other than Helladius of Caesarea, partly as a favour for having obtained a high military post for his son. Helladius, in short, was practising simony. On Ambrose's advice, Nectarius of Constantinople attempted to depose Gerontius, but he was thwarted by strong Nicomedian opposition. Nectarius' successor, St John Chrysostom, was more resolute in dealing with Gerontius, and succeeded in deposing him against all opposition.

Once such a background is appreciated, it is not hard to discern that some passages in this letter seem heatedly, if obliquely aimed at some person in particular. Gerontius, it seems, was the man. He was Helladius' candidate for Nicomedia and Gregory seems to have campaigned against this already canvassed appointment. He implores the Nicomedians not to elect someone unworthy of them. His appeal, however, did not succeed—another example of his failures at church politics. If this construction of events is correct, it gives us a hint of the kind of personal grievances Helladius may have had against Gregory as seen in **letter 1**. It is possible Gregory was not even aware of the private 'deals' between Gerontius and Helladius. Having intruded unwittingly in their schemes, he could only be utterly bewildered by the storm of Helladius' animosity against him.

Since Euphrasius was present at the Council of Constantinople in 381 (Mansi, *Concilia* III, 572A), and Patricius succeeded him as bishop of Nicomedia for some time, these events must have taken place some years *after* 381. Maraval suggests we are probably still in the 380s, since Gerontius needed some time to build up his strong following in Nicomedia. Given that Gregory also mentions his advanced age, the letter may be safely placed in Gregory's last years, late 380s–394.²³⁴

*To the presbyters of Nicomedia*²³⁵

1. *May the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort (2 Cor 1:3) who disposes all things in wisdom as it is fitting (cf. Ps 103:24), visit you with his own grace and comfort you in himself, working in you that which is well-pleasing to Him (Heb 13:21), and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ come upon you, and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:13),²³⁶ to cure you of all your tribulation and affliction and guide you towards all good, for the perfecting of the Church, for the building*

²³⁴ For studies of **letter 17** see J. Daniélou, 'L'évêque d'après une lettre de Grégoire', *Euntes Docete* 20 (1967), 85–98; and R. Staats, 'Gregor von Nyssa und das Bischofsamt', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 84 (1973), 149–173. Daniélou (p. 46) dates the letter to 390.

²³⁵ The inscription is found only in V.

²³⁶ Note the solemn invocation of the Holy Trinity.

up of your souls (cf. Eph 4.12), and for the greater praise of his glorious name.

2a. But we make this defence of ourselves before your charity, that we were not careless in discharging the visitation²³⁷ entrusted by you, either in time past, or indeed now after the passing of the blessed Patricius. Many indeed were our anxieties for the churches, and we were also greatly weakened in body, aggravated, as is to be expected, by advancing age.

2b. Yet your goodness was also greatly remiss towards us, for no word ever came by letter to invite us, or any note of explanation to our church, although blessed Euphrasius your Bishop²³⁸ had in all sincerity *bound* our slight worth to himself and to you *as with the cords of love* (cf. Hos 11.4).

3. But even though the outstanding debt of charity has not been discharged, either by us, through visitation, or by your piety through invitation, now at any rate we pray to God, taking your prayer to God as an ally of our desire, that we may visit you as soon as possible, and be comforted with you, and together with you exercise all diligence, as the Lord may lead us (cf. Rom 1.11–13). Thus may we discover a means of remedying the distresses which have already transpired, and of securing your future, so that you may no longer be torn asunder by this discord, where one withdraws himself from the Church in one direction, someone else in another, and you are thereby exposed as a laughing-stock to the Devil, whose one intent and endeavour it is to oppose the divine will in order *that none should be saved or come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim 2.4, cf. 2 Tim 2.25).

4. For how afflicted do you think we were, brothers, when we heard from those who reported to us your affairs that there was no change in the strained situation;²³⁹ but that the resolve of those who

²³⁷ ἐπισκέψεως. According to Maraval (*Lettres* 216 n. 2) this refers to the mandate of the Council of Constantinople in 381, when Gregory was proposed with Otreius and Helladius as a custodian of orthodox communion for the civil diocese of Pontus, of which Bithynia and its metropolis, Nicomedia, were part.

²³⁸ This Euphrasius subscribed to the Council of Constantinople in 381 [or the first council of C. in 360?] as bishop of Nicomedia (Mansi III, 572A). On his death, the presbyterate set about preparing for an election of his successor. According to canonical procedure, this would have been carried out by a number of neighbouring bishops presided over by the nearest Metropolitan. This is the background of the present letter, to be dated probably sometime in the late 380s.

²³⁹ οὐδεμία γέγονε τῶν ἐφεστώτων ἐπιστροφή, lit. 'no turn around/return of besetments'; alternatively τῶν ἐφεστώτων might be 'of those set over you'.

had once turned aside was continuing in the same course? For as water from a conduit often overflows the adjacent bank, diverts to one side and flows away, with the result that, unless the leak is mended, it is difficult to recall it to its channel, because the submerged bed has been hollowed out to fit the course of the outflow, just so is the impulse of secessionists.²⁴⁰ Once they have slipped aside through their contentiousness from the pious and upright faith, they soon sink deep into their accustomed groove and do not easily return to the grace that they once had.

5. Your affairs accordingly need a wise and strong administrator, skilled to channel such a situation aright, and capable of recalling the haphazard detour of this stream to its pristine beauty, so that the *cornfields* of your piety may once again *flourish abundantly* (cf. Jn 4.35, 15.8), watered by the irrigating stream of peace. **6.** For this reason you must all exercise great diligence and fervent desire in this matter, that someone may be designated by the Holy Spirit to preside over you who will keep his eye fixed wholly on the things of God and will not allow his gaze to be distracted hither and thither by any of the things prized in this life. **7.** It was because of this danger, I think, that the levitical law gave to the Levite *no share in the inheritance of the land*, in order that, as it is written, he might have God alone as the portion of his possession (cf. Num 18.20), and that he might always be solicitous for this possession in himself, not allowing his soul to be dragged down by anything material.

8. But if indeed there are some—and even we ourselves—who are indifferent, let no-one on seeing this be harmed on his own account. For what is done unfittingly by some does not make it lawful for others also to practise what is unfitting. You must rather look to what concerns yourselves, so that your church's prospects might turn for the better, when those who are scattered return again (cf. Jn 11.52) to the harmony of the one body and spiritual peace flourishes among the many who glorify God piously.²⁴¹

9. To this end, I think it is well to look for one who wants the good of the church so that he who is appointed may be fitted for the leadership.²⁴² **10.** But the apostolic word does not direct us to

²⁴⁰ ἀποστάντων, or 'apostates'.

²⁴¹ εὐσεβῶς, i.e. with orthodox faith.

²⁴² Translating with Pasquali's addition: . . . σκοπεῖν <τὸν> τὰ καλὰ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ βουλόμενον; otherwise a difficult clause might be construed as 'it is well to look for noble qualities in the one chosen for the church'.

look for high birth, wealth, or worldly lustre among the virtues of a bishop (cf. 1 Tim 3.1–7, Tit 1.7–9)—although if some of these should, as a matter of course, attend your leaders, we do not reject them, as a shadow that happens to follow along. But if not, we shall welcome the more honourable endowments not one wit less if they are without these gifts. **11.** Why the prophet Amos was a goat-herd. Peter was a fisherman, and his brother Andrew was of the same trade. So also was the sublime John. Paul was a tent-maker, Matthew a tax-collector, and it was the same way with all the others. They were not of consular rank or generals or prefects or noted for rhetoric and philosophy,²⁴³ but poor and common folk who began in the humbler occupations. And yet for all that, *their voice went out through all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world* (Ps 18.5, Rom 10.18). **12.** Consider, he says, *your calling, brothers, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called, but God chose the foolish things of the world* (1 Cor 1.26–27). **13.** Perhaps even now it is thought rather foolish, as things appear to human eyes, if one is not able to do much because of poverty, or is slighted because of humble parentage.²⁴⁴ But who knows whether the horn of anointing is not poured out by grace upon such a one, even if he is less than the lofty and more illustrious (cf. 1 Sam 10.1, 16.11).

14. What was of greater gain to the city of the Romans, that in its beginnings²⁴⁵ it should take for its leadership some high-born and pompous senator of consular rank, or Peter the fisherman who had none of this world's trappings to attract esteem? What house did he have, what slaves, what property ministering to luxury through the accumulation of wealth? No, he was a stranger without a roof over his head, without a table—yet he was richer than those who have all these things, because *having nothing he wholly had* God (cf. 2 Cor 6.10).

15. So also with the people of Mesopotamia.²⁴⁶ Though they had immensely wealthy satraps among them, they approved Thomas as

²⁴³ It is noteworthy that Gregory discounts the social and cultural advantages he himself enjoys. Contrast his sensitivity to his social status in Letter 1.

²⁴⁴ σώματος δυσγένειαν, 'meanness of lineage', or possibly 'bodily deformity'.

²⁴⁵ I.e. of the Church there.

²⁴⁶ I.e. the Edessenes; see Rufinus, *Church History* 11.5; Cf. Origen's statement in Eusebius, *Church History* 3.1.1, that Thomas was the apostle of the Parthians—who at that time ruled eastern Syria. In the fourth century AD there was a flourishing cult of St Thomas in Edessa.

their leader in preference to any of their own. With the Cretans, it was Titus (cf. Tit 1.5), and with the people of Jerusalem, James, and with us Cappadocians, the Centurion who at the Passion confessed the divinity of the Lord (cf. Mt 27.54),²⁴⁷ though there were many at that time who came from illustrious families, who maintained horse studs²⁴⁸ and solemnized themselves with the first seats in the Senate. And one may find throughout the whole Church that those who are great according to God are preferred to those who are illustrious according to this world.

16. In the present situation, I think you also need to be looking for these qualities if you really mean to revive the ancient dignity of your church. **17.** You know better than anyone else your own history, how in ancient times, before the city near you flourished,²⁴⁹ you had the kingship and no city was more eminent than yours. At present, it is true, the fair form of its public buildings has disappeared,²⁵⁰ but the city which consists in human beings—whether we consider the number or to the character of its inhabitants—is rising to a level with its ancient beauty. **18.** It would therefore not be fitting for you to maintain a purpose meaner than the blessings that are now yours, but to raise your zeal for the task that is before you to the height of the magnificence of your city, that with God's help

²⁴⁷ This is the earliest record associating the centurion at the foot of the Cross with the evangelization of Cappadocia. Later traditions identified him as Longinus, a native of Cappadocia, and described his martyrdom and subsequent cult in Caesarea. There was a martyrion dedicated to him at *Sandralis* or *Andrales* near Tyana. See M. Aubineau (ed. & tr.) *Les homélies festales d'Hésychius de Jérusalem*, 2 vols, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 59 (Brussels, 1978, 1980), 2.779–804, and D. Berges and J. Nollé, *Tyana: Archäologisch-historische Untersuchungen zum südwestlichen Kappadokien*, 2 vols (Bonn, 2000).

²⁴⁸ As Maraval remarks (*Lettres* 226 n. 1) the Cappadocian highlands were renowned in late antiquity for horse-breeding. It was a lucrative industry, supplying the horses needed for the imperial cavalry and postal service.

²⁴⁹ i.e. Nicaea, or perhaps across the Propontus, Byzantion, now renamed Constantinople. Nicomedia had once been the seat of the kings of Bithynia. The Emperor Diocletian chose to reside there, endowed it with many buildings and considered establishing it as the capital of the eastern Roman empire (cf. Lactantius, *De Mort. Persec.* 7.8–10).

²⁵⁰ On 28 August 358 Nicomedia suffered a major earthquake, in which its bishop, Cecropius, perished, and its magnificent cathedral was ruined; see Socrates 2.39, Sozomen 4.16, Ammianus Marcellinus, *Hist.* 17.7.1–8 and Libanius, *Or.* 61. Gregory also mentions this tragedy in *Against Fate* GNO 3.2/52.1–2, 54.1–2, and uses the aftermath of earthquakes as a vivid analogy of chaos in *On the Soul and Resurrection* 7.1 (Krabinger 90–92).

you may discover such a one to lead the people as will prove himself not unworthy of you.

19. For it is disgraceful, brothers, and altogether bizarre, that although no sailor ever becomes a helmsman unless he is skilled in steering, yet one who sits at the helm of the church does not know how to safely bring into the harbour of God the souls of those who sail with him! **20.** How many shipwrecks of churches, with all their members, have occurred before now through the ineptitude of their leaders! Who can reckon how many of the disasters before our eyes might not have happened, had there been at least some modicum of the helmsman's skill in these leaders? **21.** Look, we do not entrust the iron for being made into vessels to those who know nothing about the matter, but to those who know the art of the smith. Ought we not also trust souls to one who is well skilled in softening them through the *fervour of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 18.25, Rom 12.11) and who by the impress of rational implements²⁵¹ may perfect each of you as a *chosen and useful vessel* (cf. Acts 9.15, 2 Tim 3.2)?

22. The divine Apostle commands that we exercise such forethought when in the Epistle to Timothy he lays down a law for all his hearers when he says that a *Bishop must be irreproachable* (1 Tim 3.2). **23.** Is this all that the Apostle cares about, that anyone proposed for the episcopacy²⁵² should be *irreproachable*? And what is the advantage so great in this that it could sum up the good? **24.** But he knows that the subordinate is conformed to his superior and that the virtues of the leader become those of his followers. For as the teacher is, so is the disciple fashioned to be. For it is impossible that one who has been apprenticed to the art of the smith should fulfil his training by weaving, or that one who has been taught to work at the loom should turn out an orator or a surveyor. No, the disciple transfers to himself the pattern he sees in his master. It is for this reason it says, *every disciple shall be fashioned like his teacher* (Lk 6.40).²⁵³

²⁵¹ δια τῆς τῶν λογικῶν ὀργάνων, τυπόσεως. Gregory applies the analogy of the metal-worker to the ministry of bishops: the bishop fashions the faithful with the 'impress' or 'seal' of the sacraments which are instilled with the Logos/Word (λογικῶν), together with the 'heat' (ζέσει) of the Holy Spirit. Gregory, however, expects that not only the sacraments but their minister, the bishop himself, be filled with the 'zest', 'heat', 'fervour' of the Spirit.

²⁵² εἰς ἱερωσύνης. At this period ἱερωσύνη, like *sacerdotium* in Latin, often refers to the 'high-priesthood', i.e. of a bishop, and is less commonly applied to presbyters.

²⁵³ On this topic, see also Gregory's treatises *On Perfection*, *On the Christian Profession*, *Sketch of the Aim of True Asceticism* (*de instituto Christiano*).

25. What then brothers? Is it possible to become humble-minded, calm in manner, moderate, superior to the love of money-making, wise in things divine and trained to virtue and fairness in one's ways, if these qualities have not been seen in the teacher? **26.** On the contrary, I do not know how anyone can become spiritual who has done his learning in a school of worldliness, for how shall they who are striving to become like such a one fail to be as he is?

27. Of what benefit to the thirsty is a magnificent aqueduct if there is no water in it? However symmetrical the placement of columns, with all their variegated form bearing the pediment aloft, which would the thirsty prefer to supply his need: to see bare stones beautifully laid out, or to find a spring, even if it flowed from a wooden pipe, provided only that the stream it pours forth is clear and drinkable?

28. Accordingly, brothers, those who look to piety should pay no attention to outward appearance. Indeed, if a man boasts of his friends or preens himself on the list of his honours or tallies his multiple annual profits or is puffed up at the thought of his ancestry or brags on all sides in his conceit, they should have no more to do with him than with a dry aqueduct, if he does not possess in his own life the qualities required.

28a. Instead, you should employ the lamp of the Spirit in your search (cf. Mt 6.22, Lk 11.33–34, 15.8) seeking out as best you can *a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed* (Sg 4.12),²⁵⁴ as the Scripture says, so that when through the laying on of hands the garden of delight is opened and the water of the fountain is unstopped (cf. Ez 36.35), the grace that is in him will become the common possession of the whole church.

²⁵⁴ This is exactly what was accomplished when Gregory's brother, Peter, then superior of the monastery at Annisa, was chosen as bishop and metropolitan of Sebasteia; Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 8.75: 'We summon to the magistracies of these churches men of ability and good life. But instead of selecting the ambitious among them, we put those whose deep humility makes them backward in accepting this general charge of the Church except under constraint. Our best rulers then, are like consuls compelled to rule by a mighty Emperor—no other, we are persuaded, than the Son of God, who is the Word of God. If then, these magistracies in the assembly of God's nation rule well, or at all events strictly in accordance with the Divine enactment, they are not because of that to meddle with secular law-making. It is not that Christians wish to escape all public responsibility that they keep themselves away from such things. They wish instead to reserve themselves for the higher and more urgent responsibilities (ἀναγκαιοτέρᾳ λειτουργίᾳ) of God's Church.'

29. May the Lord grant that such a one may soon be found among you: one who will be *a chosen vessel* (Acts 9.15), *a pillar and foundation of the Truth* (1 Tim 3.15). But we trust in the Lord that this is how it will turn out, if you are indeed resolved to seek together the common good through the cooperation of minds having but a single desire,²⁵⁵ preferring to your own wishes the will of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning *what is good and well-pleasing and perfect* (Rom 12.2). May there be such a happy outcome among you that we can boast and you find delight and the God of all be glorified, to whom belongs the glory for ever and ever.

LETTER 18 TO OTREIUS BISHOP OF MELITENE²⁵⁶

Earlier opinion favoured the writing of this letter in the mid 370s. Zaccagni thought that the ‘war’ and the carping criticism here lamented, referred to Eustathius of Sebasteia and his circle, who found plenty of fault in the liturgical gestures and even the dress of the Catholics.²⁵⁷ Thus the view was taken that this letter shows Gregory’s circumstances during his exile, 376–378. Pasquali²⁵⁸ however, argued that the letter was written at Sebasteia in 380, in the same tumultuous circumstances reported in **letters 19** and **22**. Maraval concurs. Thus the letter is best situated or the culminating events of mid 379-mid 380.

On the addressee Otreius, see the notes prefacing **letter 10**. If **letters 10** and **18** were written in the same circumstances, then **letter 18** was evidently written *before letter 10*, because in that letter he is exultant at the news of an impending visit of Otreius, whereas here he is delighted simply to have written communication.

The letter affords us a precious glimpse of Gregory’s ordinary daily life at Nyssa (**18.5**), and during his confinement at Sebasteia (**18.9**).

*To Otreius, Bishop of Melitene*²⁵⁹

1. How beautiful are the likenesses of beautiful things when they preserve distinctly in themselves the character and form of the arche-

²⁵⁵ Maraval notes (*Lettres* 233 n. 1) that συμπνοία, ‘shared aspiration’, is a term with rich associations in Gregory’s thought, studied by J. Daniélou, ‘Conspiratio chez Grégoire de Nyse’, *L’homme devant Dieu . . . Mélanges Henri de Lubac* (Paris, 1961), 295–308. The passage is a good example of Gregory’s use of redundancy: the same idea is expressed in three different ways.

²⁵⁶ Mss.: PFV; ed. GNO 8.1, 58–61; tr.: Letter 14, NPNF, 538–539.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, towards the end.

²⁵⁸ Pasquali, *Le Lettere*, p. 76.

²⁵⁹ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὁρηῖω ἐπισκόπῳ μελιτηνῆς F, τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὁτρέι///ον ἐπίσκοπον in the margin of P, missing in V.

typal beauty! **2.** For in the sweetness of your letter I beheld the most distinct image of your truly beautiful soul. You filled it with honey, as the Gospel says in one place, *from the abundance of the heart* (Mt 12.34).

For this reason, and from the friendliness of your letter, I fancied I was looking at you in person and enjoying the good cheer in your eyes. Again and again I took your letter into my hands for the pleasure of it and went through it from beginning to end, which only kindled the desire to enjoy it all the more. There was no satiety in the draught, since satiety can no more spoil the pleasure than it can of any other pleasure in things beautiful and precious by nature. **3.** For our constant participation in the sun does not blunt our longing to behold it, just as the unbroken enjoyment of health does not hinder our desire for this too. We are persuaded therefore that it is impossible that our enjoyment of your goodness, which we have often known face to face and now by letter, should ever reach the point of satiety. But just as they suffer who from some cause thirst unquenchably, so in a way it is with us. The more we take our fill of your blessings, the more we thirst for them.

4. But that you may not suppose our language to be a kind of fawning and lying flattery—and surely you will not suppose that, since you are in all else and especially to us, if anyone is, kindly and genuine—you will certainly believe me when I say that the grace of your letter, applied to my eyes like some healing remedy, staunched my ever-flowing *fountain of tears* (Jer 9.1), and that we look to the healing power of your holy prayers which already supports our soul slumped as it is beneath a barrage of misfortunes, and we place all our hopes in it that the suffering of our soul shall be quickly and completely healed.²⁶⁰ Yet we are, for the present at any rate, in such a situation that we spare the ears of your goodness and bury the truth in silence, that we might not drag those who truly love us into fellowship with our misfortunes.

5. For when we reflect that we are embroiled in wars, bereft of our dearest, and that we were forced to leave behind *our children*

²⁶⁰ The text is disturbed. Jaeger/Pasquali have restored it with help from In his own edition, P. Maraval (236, n. 1) laments the absence of four words from their construction which are present in the three codices. They are translated here as ‘and place all our hopes in it’.

whom we were deemed worthy to bear to God in spiritual labour-pains (cf. 1 Cor 4.14–15), a wife joined to us by law,²⁶¹ who in the midst of danger and afflictions, during the times of trial showed us her affection (cf. 2 Cor 8.2), and besides these a dearly loved home,²⁶² brothers,²⁶³ relatives, familiars, associates, friends, hearth, table, store-room, pallet,²⁶⁴ the bench, the sacking,²⁶⁵ the secluded corner, the prayer, the tears—how sweet they are, and how dearly prized through long habit, I need not write to you who know full well. But that I might not burden you in the telling, consider for yourself how far otherwise are all that I have instead of these. **6.** Now that I approach the end of my life, I begin to live again, for I must learn the elaborate manners which are now the fashion. But coming late to the school of such mischief and knavery, we are constantly blushing at our ineptitude for the study.

7. The teachers of this wisdom who are ranged against us are capable, being retentive of what they have learned and inventive of what they have not learned. They band together to make war, skirmishing at a distance, and then at a signal, regrouping in a phalanx. First they lay ambush by stealth, then they take by surprise with exaggerations, surrounding themselves with allies on every side.

8. A vast mammon,²⁶⁶ invincible in power, accompanies them, advancing before them like some ambidextrous combatant fighting with both hands as he leads the battle, on one side exacting tribute from those under his sway, on the other striking those who come forward to meet him.

9. But if you care to inquire into our private domestic arrangements you will find other troubles besides: a hut numbingly cold, gloom, confinement and all such advantages, a life examined censoriously

²⁶¹ σύμβιος νόμῳ συνηρισμένη, . . . PF. V lacks the σύμβιος and has συνηρισμένα, meaning *the children* joined to Gregory by law, i.e. the members of his flock at Nyssa. Pasquali, who restored the text, *Le Lettere* 78–79, considers that the phrase, as with *children*, refers metaphorically to Gregory's church of Nyssa, and Maraval concurs. For a beautiful demonstration of the loyalty of Gregory's church, see letter 6.

²⁶² οἶκος κεχαριτωμένος.

²⁶³ ἀδελφοί, i.e., monks and virgins (see letter 6.10), of whom his own sister, Theosebia, was one, an *adelphē* both in the flesh and in the spirit.

²⁶⁴ στιβάς, something strewn or stuffed with straw, perhaps a mattress, and hence 'bed'.

²⁶⁵ ὁ σάκκος, or sack, sackcloth: for storage of grain?

²⁶⁶ An Aramaic word from the Gospels (Mt 6.24 et al.) = 'wealth'.

by everyone: the voice, the look, the way of draping one's cloak, the movement of the hands, the position of the feet and all such matter for busybodies. And if there is not an audible breathing, and if from time to time a protracted groan is not emitted with the breathing, and if the tunic does not come out from our belt²⁶⁷ and especially if the belt itself is not used, **10.** and if our mantle²⁶⁸ does not hang freely by the sides, and if we have not pulled one of its borders to the shoulders²⁶⁹—the omission of any of these becomes a pretext for those who make war against us. On such grounds they gather for battle against us, man by man, town by town, even to the least of places.²⁷⁰

11. Of course, one cannot always be faring well or ill, since life for everyone is usually a mix of contrarities. But if by God's grace you continue to stand by us, we will bear with the abundance of present annoyances in the hope of always sharing in your goodness. Never cease then in showing us such favours, through which you will both comfort us and prepare for yourself an ampler reward for keeping the commandments.

LETTER 19 TO A CERTAIN JOHN ESPECIALLY ON MACRINA²⁷¹

This most important letter was edited for the first time in 1731 by J. B. Carraciolo, as one of the seven letters 19–25 he had discovered in F. These were absent from V which until that time had formed the basis of Gregory's published letters.²⁷² Nevertheless it took many years for the historical implications of the present letter to percolate through to historians and patristic scholars. For that the credit is due to Franz Diekamp.²⁷³ Earlier commentators had vaguely supposed that Gregory had somehow been elected bishop of Ibora. Diekamp elucidated the proper sequence: that just as Gregory had responded to the embassy from Ibora (**19.12**) and travelled

²⁶⁷ εἰ μὴ διεκπίπτει τῆς ζώνης ἡμῶν τὸ χιτῶνιον. Presumably this means the belt is to be drawn in and not left loose. Basil discusses the proper use of the belt for monks in Longer Responses 23.

²⁶⁸ ἡ διπλοῖς, a bishop's cloak; see GNaz *Or.* 43.73, where Basil is compared with Samuel.

²⁶⁹ 'and if we have not . . . shoulders', is found only in P.

²⁷⁰ 'κατ' ἀνδρὸς καὶ δῆμους καὶ ἐσχατίας.

²⁷¹ Mss.: PF; ed.: GNO, 8.2, 62–68.

²⁷² See Pasquali, LXXXV.

²⁷³ In his essay 'Die Wahl Gregors von Nyssa zum Metropolit von Sebaste im Jahre 380', *Theologische Quartalschrift* 90 (1908), 384–401.

there to supervise the election of a new bishop, so too he responded to an embassy from Sebasteia (**19.13b**) and travelled there to undertake the same sort of mission. It was at Sebasteia that all the lamentable events reported in the latter part of this letter took place. He clarified that the 'return from Armenia' of which Gregory speaks in his **letter 29** to Peter, refers to a return from his enforced stay in Sebasteia. Thus, according to Diekamp, the letter was written from Sebasteia in the first half of 380, while Gregory was still constrained in the circumstances described at the latter part of the letter. 'Gregory was bishop and prisoner in Sebasteia, exactly between Winter and Spring'.²⁷⁴ For more on the chronology of this letter, see the Introduction, 'Gregory's return from exile and rise in Church affairs'.

The addressee, John, is much engaged in Church affairs in 'the city'. He is either a bishop or someone in senior church administration, since Gregory speaks of 'your church' (**19.20**). It is not so evident whether he was resident of Antioch itself. At any rate Gregory seems to have met the present John there during the council of Neo-nicene bishops in 379, since in **10a** he speaks of having 'left your region' to return to Cappadocia and thence to Macrina's death-bed, and in **10c** of his first visit to his fatherland after his 'return journey from Antioch'. It would be an exciting thought that it might be a youngish John Chrysostom, sometime student of Libanius and protégé of Bishop Meletius. But it seems too early in Chrysostom's career. In 379 he may have been barely returning from his ascetic years in the caves outside Antioch and was not yet even a deacon. But we may be sure that he would have been very interested to hear of Macrina's ascetic life-style.

The present John is concerned that he has had no communication from Gregory in the many months since their meeting. Having heard some strange rumours, he wrote to Gregory to ask what was happening. The letter eventually reached Gregory in Sebasteia, and **letter 19** is his reply. The style is somewhat formal—Gregory most often uses the plural of modesty of himself, occasionally (and characteristically) slipping into the singular. He clearly intended this letter as a kind of bulletin of his affairs to someone well placed in church affairs, meant to correct any misinformation. He expects John to share it with others for the 'common good'.

No other of Gregory's letters is so rich with biographical and chronological material. Even so we could wish he had been more specific about the motives and actions behind the uproar in Sebasteia that led to his confinement, for the last part of the letter almost descends into incoherence as he laments the calamity that has overtaken him. It is clear enough that he found himself elected metropolitan bishop of Sebasteia and that this took him completely by surprise. He seems to have refused or resisted the appointment, and then somehow the military authorities were called in to restrain the uproar and keep him in Sebasteia. There seems to have been at least a fourfold strife between the Pneumatomachian partisans of

²⁷⁴ Pasquali, *Le Lettere* 94.

Eustathius, the orthodox minded Sebasteians, the Governor, and his own unwillingness.

The brief but intense cameo of Gregory's sister, **19.6–10**, is a foreshadowing and a promise of the *Life of Macrina*. It is the earliest documentation we have of Macrina's existence, her way of life and her funeral led by Gregory, written less than a year after her death. The witness of her lifestyle, her conversations with him which were so formative and strengthening of his religious spirit, and above all his providential participation in her dying hours had a profound affect on him. It only needed time to absorb and reflect on these events. Then, when the occasion offered, he set out to make his remarkable sister better known to the world.

To a certain John on certain subjects, especially on the way of life and the character of his sister Macrina.²⁷⁵

Introduction: the analogy of the painter

1. I know of some²⁷⁶ painters, who, when they copy the form as an image, are keen to bestow a kind of profitless honour even on the uglier of their friends, though they accomplish, in a way, the opposite of what they wish. For when in their imitation they correct nature—so they think—by disguising the unsightly form beneath a bright display of colours on the panel, they change the character, with the result that their intention to honour their friend becomes, through this 'improved' imitation, the very reason why the friend can no longer be seen in the image at all.

2a. For their friends, there is no profit in the light brown hair arching high over the forehead and glinting with highlights, the bloom on the lips and the flush of the cheeks, the curve of the eyelids, the corners of the eyes and the eyebrows picked out with black, and the shining forehead above the eyebrows, and whatever else of the kind that contributes to beauty of form. For unless the one presented to the painter for imitation has these qualities by nature, he

²⁷⁵ ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τινα Ἰωάννην περὶ τινων ὑποθέσεων καὶ περὶ τῆς διαγωγῆς καὶ καταστάσεως τῆς τοιαύτης ἀδελφῆς αὐτοῦ Μακρίνης F, τοῦ αὐτοῦ P. The τοιαύτης does not make much sense. One conjectures that a later copyist read τῆς ἀδελφῆς Μακρίνης, which in classical Greek was perfectly sufficient to convey 'of his sister', but thinking the possessive needed to be made more explicit, added a note such as τοῦ αὐτοῦ, which became corrupted.

²⁷⁶ Reading τινας with F, rather than τινα P (someone). Gregory continues shortly using the plural: διορθοῦνται. Cf. Basil's analogy of the portrait painter in Letter 2, Def. 1.17.

gains nothing from the benevolent gesture. Instead, through the painter's art the panel displays a pleasant face, brightly decked all round, but the friend's face discloses itself as otherwise, and so shows up the excess of the attempted honour.

2b. The same thing, it seems to me, happens when anyone bestows flatteries on someone he loves in order to gain the praises of friendship. So he depicts him in words not as he is, but as someone might be like who is in every way perfect. He may sketch the upright life in words, but by these extravagant praises he does not so much dignify his friend as rebuke him for contradicting the word by his life and as revealing himself to be other than he is supposed to be.

3a. What then do I mean by speaking this way?

I saw in the letter of your charity, a kind of human sculpture, finely wrought in sharpest detail—and its name was myself, for so the inscription informed me. But when I looked into my own life in exact detail as in a mirror, I knew that I was far removed from the verbal description. I surmised that in this way you were displaying your love of goodness, for, having deemed that this is what I was like, this is what you loved. You gave the most evident proof of the uprightness of your dispositions, that you have no other motive for your love but that of virtue alone, and, since you believed that some share of this was in us, you counted us among the most genuine of your friends.

3b. ²⁷⁷I therefore thought it better that you learn what concerns me from myself rather than be misled by other witnesses, even if those witnesses may be reliable in all else. For this is what the word of the proverb also recommends, that they come to *recognize themselves* (cf. Prov 13.10 Sept) who are willing to know themselves according to the word from without.²⁷⁸

4. But so much for this. That I may not appear to be secretly courting praise by declining it, and given that you bid us put some effort into giving an answer to your enquiries about our affairs, and in order by such a task to benefit the common good,²⁷⁹ know then,

²⁷⁷ Pasquali considers there is a lacuna at this point. He proposed as the sense of what Gregory may have written: <But though you are a man of such authority, I know that you are thoroughly mistaken.>

²⁷⁸ κατὰ τὸν ἑξῶθεν λόγον. Gregory seems to be conflating the famous saying γνῶθι σαυτὸν (know yourself!), carved on the Temple at Delphi, with Proverbs 13.10 οἱ δε ἐαυτῶν ἐπιγινώσκοντες σοφοί (those who discern themselves are wise).

²⁷⁹ ὠφελεῖσαι τι τὸ κοῖνον, i.e. this letter to John is a newsletter to be shared with others.

that lately I have not had much less leisure than the one of whom one of the prophets speaks (cf. Amos 5.19), who, having grappled with a lion and scarcely extracted himself from its jaws and the slashing of its claws, at the very moment he thought to be escaping, found himself in the mouth of a bear; and then, having with much struggle emerged from this danger too and rested himself against the wall, he comes upon a snake lying in wait to bite him.

4a. Something like this has been the relentless succession of troubles that have befallen us. The waves of distresses have so overlapped each another, they seem to be continually preparing to overtop by a little what had already overtaken us.²⁸⁰ **5.** But if it is not an imposition to be rewarding those who love me with gloomy tales, I will briefly set out for you the sorry story.

OUR SISTER MACRINA

6. We had a sister who was for us a teacher of how to live,²⁸¹ a mother in place of our mother. Such was her freedom²⁸² towards God that she was for us *a strong tower* (Ps 60.4) and a *shield of favour*

²⁸⁰ For the same idea of one wave of troubles succeeding another, see Basil's Letter 123, Def. 2.254–257.

²⁸¹ τοῦ βίου διδάσκαλος. Since βίος frequently means 'way of life', this means that Macrina was Gregory's teacher in the principles of the Christian ascetic life. To judge from VSM 17.2 (GNO 8.1.386–387, Maraval, 190–192), his last visit to her may be dated to late 371, when the relationship between sister and brother seems to have been renewed and strengthened. This may be linked to four more or less contemporaneous events which may have been occasions of contact: 1. The death of Emmelia their mother (370) triggered a renewed affection. Gregory very much regards Macrina as a taking her place towards him; indeed she took Emmelia's place as the head of the household at Annisa, which was by now a monastic community. 2. Basil, newly a bishop, commissioned Gregory to write *On Virginity* in 370–371. Since Gregory was coming from the married life and from a civil career, he may well have thought to consult Macrina as his 'Teacher' in Christian asceticism. 3. The ordination to the presbyterate of Peter, the youngest in the family and head of the house of men at Annisa took place soon after, 370. 4. Gregory's own reluctant ordination to the episcopacy by Basil (c. late 371). This surely was the moment when he visited Macrina in Annisa and received from her instruction and encouragement in his new course. The VSM confirms that she 'honoured his priesthood (= episcopacy)'.

²⁸² παρρησίαν, lit. 'freedom of speech', ease of access, daring confidence, boldness. This is not the illusory 'freedom' towards God of mindless presumption, but the deep freedom of someone who had paid the interior cost through a life of self-denial, prayer and great love.

(Ps 5.13) as the Scripture says, and a *fortified city* (Ps 30.22, 59.11) and a name of utter assurance, through her freedom towards God that came of her way of life.

7. She dwelt in a remote part of Pontus,²⁸³ having exiled herself from the life of human beings. Gathered around her was a great choir of virgins whom she had brought forth by her spiritual labours (cf. 1 Cor 4.15, Gal 4.19) and guided towards perfection through her consummate care, while she herself imitated the life of angels in a human body. **8.** With her there was no distinction between night and day. Rather, the night showed itself active with the deeds of light (cf. Rom 12.12–13, Eph 5.8) and day imitated the tranquillity of night through serenity of life. The psalmodes resounded in her house at all times night and day.

9. You would have seen a reality incredible even to the eyes: the flesh not seeking its own, the stomach, just as we expect in the Resurrection, having finished with its own impulses, streams of tears poured out (cf. Jer. 9.1, Ps 79.6) to the measure of a cup,²⁸⁴ the mouth *meditating the law at all times* (Ps 1.2, 118.70), the ear attentive to divine things, the hand ever active²⁸⁵ with the commandments (cf. Ps 118.48). How indeed could one bring before the eyes a reality that transcends description in words?²⁸⁶

10a. Well then, after I left your region, I had halted among the Cappadocians,²⁸⁷ when unexpectedly I received some disturbing news

²⁸³ τοῦ Πόντου τὰ ἔσχατα. Gregory tends to use the related term ἐσχατία, to mean 'retreat' or religious solitude. The family estate of Annisa, transformed by Macrina into a monastery, was not so 'remote' in the sense of physically difficult of access. It lay on the great Pontic Road about a day's journey west of Neoceasarea, overlooking the fertile plain of the *Phanaroea*.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 1106.

²⁸⁵ αἰκίνητος, though Gregory is thinking of Psalm 118, the actual word is from a Platonic dialogue (*Phaedrus* 245C).

²⁸⁶ Cf. VSM 13.3 (GNO 8.1, 382, Maraval 176–178) ὡς ὑπερβαίνειν τὴν ἐκ τῶν λόγων ὑπογραφὴν, that it surpasses description in words; VSM 13.6 *ibid.*, τὴν τοιαύτην διαγωγὴν τίς ἂν ὑπ' ὄψιν ἀγάγοι λόγος ἀνθρώπινος, 'what human eloquence could bring this kind of life before your eyes?'

²⁸⁷ Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν ἐπέστην παρ' ὑμῶν τοῖς Καππαδόκαις. The παρ' ὑμῶν refers to his departure 'from' John. By 'the Cappadocians', Gregory may mean that he has just come through the Taurus mountains and reached Cappadocia, perhaps at Tyana. In which case the ten days journey was from *south* of Caesarea to Pontus. Most readers have assumed he means Caesarea (cf. 14.3 'the metropolis of the Cappadocians'), but it may be doubted that it was a ten days journey from Caesarea to Annisa 'with haste'. He did not go to Nyssa, since as VSM 18.1 (GNO 8.1.387, Maraval 192) says, Peter had set out to fetch him but missed him, because he had taken a different route, no doubt south-west through Amasea.

of her.²⁸⁸ There was a ten days' journey between us, so I covered the whole distance as quickly as possible and at last reached Pontus where I saw her and she saw me. **10b.** But it was the same as a traveller at noon whose body is exhausted from the sun. He runs up to a spring, but alas, before he has touched the water, before he has cooled his tongue, all at once the stream dries up before his eyes and he finds the water turned to dust. **10c.** So it was with me. At the tenth year²⁸⁹ I saw her whom I so longed to see, who was for me²⁹⁰ in place of a mother and a teacher and every good, but before I could satisfy my longing, on the third day I buried her and returned on my way.²⁹¹

Such was my first visit to my fatherland²⁹² after my return journey from Antioch.

GREGORY'S MINISTRY IN PONTUS

11. Next, before I had digested this misfortune, the Galatians²⁹³ who were neighbours of my church, having stealthily sown the sickness of the heresies usual among them in various places of my church, provided me with no small struggle.²⁹⁴ We were barely able, with God's help, to put down the disease everywhere.

12. Then other events followed these. Iborra is a city situated in the mountains of Pontus. It has been disposed towards us and towards

²⁸⁸ This news is not mentioned at VSM 17 (GNO 8.1, 386–387, Maraval 190–192), where he simply says that as he returned from Antioch, the desire grew in him to visit his sister, and that he was disturbed by a foreboding dream a day before he reached Annisa.

²⁸⁹ On the face of it, this conflicts with the data in VSM 17.2 (GNO 8.1.386–387, Maraval, 190–192), that it was just short of eight years since he had last seen his sister. Gregory no doubt is using a quick reckoning perhaps rounding it to the decade, whereas in the VSM he is much more deliberate in his calculation. Or could it mean a decade since his mother's death, when Macrina took her place for him?

²⁹⁰ The references here are singular, μοι, i.e. personal to Gregory himself.

²⁹¹ ὑπέστρεφον. Gregory returned south to Nyssa. The VSM makes it clear that on the way back he passed through Sebastopolis.

²⁹² ταῦτα μοι τῆς Πατρίδος μετὰ τὴν ἐπάνοδόν μου τὴν ἐξ Ἀντιοχείας εἰσιτήρια. This is proof positive that neither Gregory nor his siblings were born in Cappadocia.

²⁹³ i.e. to the west of Nyssa. Rather than Marcellians, the 'Galatians' here are more likely Homoians and Arianizers who since the demise of Valens have lost their political ascendancy with. See Basil, Letter 237, especially 237.10, 239 and 232.

²⁹⁴ Gregory's underminers have made progress during his protracted absence.

the sound faith from ancient times. Now its bishop having lately departed from this life²⁹⁵ the whole body sent an embassy petitioning us not to overlook it,²⁹⁶ delivered as it was into the hands of enemies and being torn apart. **13a.** There were tears, fallings at the feet, lamentations, supplications and all such things through which there has come upon us the present train of evils.

13b. For since we had come to Pontus,²⁹⁷ and, with God as co-worker (cf. 2 Cor 6.1),²⁹⁸ we were attending to the proper order for the church among them,²⁹⁹ there promptly came upon us in that place like-minded representatives from the main body of Sebasteians,³⁰⁰ expecting us to forestall a take-over there by the heretics.

UPROAR IN THE ELECTORAL SYNOD AT SEBASTEIA

14. The events that followed are worthy of silence and wordless groans (cf. Rom 8.26) and unending grief and sorrow unabating with the passage of time. For human beings put up with other evils well enough once they become used to them, but as time has gone by, the evils here have only grown worse through the invention of new ones still more intolerable.

15. Well then, in accordance with the procedure, I was with the other bishops who were called together for this very purpose: that I might receive their votes for the laying on of hands.³⁰¹ The vote,

²⁹⁵ If Araxius, the local bishop who had so recently presided with Gregory at Macrina's funeral and whom he had named, had been the bishop of Ibora, why does Gregory not advert to his identity here? Rather, the credentials of Magnopolis as the seat perhaps of a chorepiscopus might be preferred. It was much nearer Annisa than was Ibora.

²⁹⁶ καὶ τοῦ ἐπισκοποῦντος αὐτὴν προσφάτως ὑπεξελθόντος τὸν βίον, πανδημεὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐπρεσβεύσαντο.

²⁹⁷ ἐπειδὴ γὰρ ἐγενόμεθα κατὰ τὸν Πόντον, i.e. Gregory had journeyed up to Pontus again to help sort out the affairs of Ibora's church.

²⁹⁸ συνεργία Θεοῦ.

²⁹⁹ During this mission Gregory installed Pansophius as the bishop of Ibora, who attended the Council of Constantinople in 381 (Mansi, *Concilia* III, 572A). See Maraval, 'Un correspondant de Grégoire de Nazianze identifié: Pansophios d'Ibora', *Vigiliae Christianae* 42 (1988), 24–26.

³⁰⁰ παρὰ τοῦ πλήθους τῶν Σεβαστενῶν. From this circumstance and the sequel, Dickamp, 'Die Wahl', demonstrated that Gregory wrote the letter from Sebasteia in 380.

³⁰¹ ὡς ψήφους ὑπὲρ χειροτονίας δεξόμενος. Evidently Gregory presided over an electoral synod for the see of Sebasteia, left vacant by the death of Eustathius. Here

alas, was for me.³⁰² Yes, wretched I, in my naïveté, was taken by my own feathers!³⁰³ **16.** Thereupon dissensions broke out, pressures were brought to bear, tears, fallings at the feet, takings into custody, a military detachment, and the count himself appointed over them campaigning against us³⁰⁴ and moving the authority of the governor against us and assembling every pretext for this tyranny against us, until we were cast into the evils of Babylon (cf. 2 Kg 25).³⁰⁵

17. With them there was so great a contrast in what concerns the faith with those of olden times, that in their case, the disease only entrenched itself and became harder to dislodge. Their malady made war against those who were attempting to cure it. **18.** They were ignorant moreover, and in their speech³⁰⁶ rougher in voice and in their manner wilder than barbarians, and so practised in inventiveness for evil in the stealthy manner of wild beasts, that with them

he is acting as scrutineer of the votes. Much remedial work was needed in the Church in Sebasteia. It had been a centre of ecclesiastical trouble for most of the 370s due to Eustathius' arianizing politics, his collaboration with the emperor Valens, and his hardened attitude to everything that Basil and the Cappadocian Neo-nicenes represented.

³⁰² This was potentially uncanonical. The transfer of a bishop from one see to another was forbidden by canon 15 of the Council of Nicaea. The principle would be made a pretext in the following year (381) for ousting Gregory Nazianzen from Constantinople. Yet some canons did provide for exceptions to be made in the interests of the church. See the long discussion of 4th cent. canonical provisions in Diekamp, 'Die Wahl', 394–400.

³⁰³ τοῖς ἑμᾶντοῦ πτεροῖς ἀλισκόμενος, an allusion to Aeschylus' lost play, *The Myrmidons*, where an eagle, shot by an arrow, sees its feathering on the arrow and says: τάδ' οὐχ ὑπ' ἄλλων, ἀλλὰ τοῖς αὐτῶν πτεροῖς ἀλισκόμεθα—'so we are taken, not by others', but by our own feathers.' See Stefan Radt, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, vol. 3, Aeschylus, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck Ruprecht, 1985), Fr. 139, pp 252–256. The survival of the fragment attests it was a famous saying; Basil himself seems to allude to it in the *Great Asketikon* Longer Responses 28.1.

³⁰⁴ Does this mean, paradoxically, that he acted to enforce the election against Gregory's will?

³⁰⁵ This refers to the capture and deportation to Babylon of the people of Jerusalem (2 Kg 25), with the Babylonians as the figure of the Sebasteians. Gregory is taken into (protective? coercive?) custody, from where he writes the present letter. The trouble is still unresolved at the time of writing. Pasquali marks a lacuna at this point, though Maraval thinks the existing text can be accounted for.

³⁰⁶ The reference is to Armenian. The population of Armenia Minor was a mix of both Greek speakers and Armenian speakers, which would have been especially evident at a congress of bishops and people from all parts of the province. See Diekamp, 'Die Wahl', 391. Gregory is being polite here by not naming the Armenians as such. Gregory Nazianzen, in his *Eulogy on Basil*, Oration 43.17 is more straightforward: 'I do not find the Armenians a candid race, but too secretive and crafty.'

it was not so much a case of an Archimedes,³⁰⁷ as of a Sisyphus or a Cercyon or a Sceiron,³⁰⁸ or some other such characters we hear about in the histories, who were always readier with falsehood than with any truth.

Such is their shamelessness, so bold their lying that they obstruct those who insist on the truth in this matter. With them, to be rebuked for the worst vices becomes an occasion of popularity with the crowd. Indeed, arrogance and roughness and callousness and uncouthness of speech are considered to be political savvy³⁰⁹ and some sort of love of the good.

CONCLUSION

19. We have avoided a letter of immoderate length and set out for you these few events out of many, that you might not judge our present delay in writing as indifference on our part. For how is it possible for one in these circumstances to bear it equably when his own name is bandied about? **20.** But if, all the same, you would like us to devote more time to these matters at a later stage, lend me yourself above all and the time for us to come together—provided the ‘lotus’ of the city³¹⁰ does not charm you more than our affection. But if affairs overwhelm you there—for I hear that your whole church detains you—you shall fight with us well enough if you beg from God some release from the evils that assail us. Then perhaps, if God grants it and such leisure ever comes our way, we shall not be reckoned as contributing nothing to the common good.

LETTER 20 TO ADELPHIUS THE SCHOLASTICUS³¹¹

The addressee is the same Adelphius to whom Gregory Nazianzen wrote his letter 204 and perhaps also Libanius his letter 1049 (or 969). In

³⁰⁷ His inventiveness was of the empirical and useful kind.

³⁰⁸ Sisyphus, king of Corinth, is called in *Iliad* 6.145–155 ‘most crafty of men’. His name was a byword for cunning. Cercyon and Sceiron were brigands put to death by Theseus.

³⁰⁹ πολιτισμός, alternatively, ‘urbanity’, ‘elegance’, ‘politesse’. There are undertones of Plato’s censure of Athenian ‘democracy’ here, as being nothing better than ochlocracy, irrationality and an appeal to lower instincts.

³¹⁰ With reference to the ‘lotus-eaters’, Homer, *Odyssey* 9.93 ff.

³¹¹ Mss.: PF; ed.: GNO 8.2, 68–72, tr.: Letter 15, NPNF 2nd Ser. vol. 5, 539–540.

Nazianzen's letter Adelphius appears as a cultivated man of high social rank, probably a pagan, but not indisposed to Christianity and its worthy representatives. That impression is corroborated here. A σχολαστικός was a kind of legal officer in the imperial service. This is partly supported at the end of the letter where Gregory addresses him as λογιότητι, 'your eloquence'. Adelphius became a *consular Galatiae* in the year 392.

Gregory writes this letter ostensibly on the first day of a visit to Adelphius' country estate at Vanota on the River Halys, a day's journey west of Caesarea. Gregory could have easily fulfilled this invitation at any time on one of his journeys between Nyssa and Caesarea. It is difficult to date precisely, but 379 seems reasonable, since Gregory's literary career was under-way in that year and he was often in Caesarea that year.

The letter is a study in literary art offered as a courteous compliment to Gregory's absent host, the same type of gift of which he speaks in **letter 4.3**. In stylistic terms it comprises one long *ecphrasis* or graphic description, in this case of Adelphius' country estate. To establish a mood of shared light intimacy, Gregory defaults to the common cultural stock of the upper classes: the traditional *topoi* of a classical education. To judge from the absence of any scriptural citation or mark of Christian piety in this letter, Adelphius was either not a Christian, or at best a nominal catechumen. The oratory to the Martyrs Gregory mentions here may have been at the entrance of the town rather than on the estate, or if within the estate, sponsored by Adelphius for his Christian workers and the local populace.

Pasquali³¹² compares at length the villa described here with the Roman country villas described by Pliny the Younger in Letters 2.17 and 5.6. Friedrich Müller³¹³ however, considers that the description is of more of a specifically Greek type of villa with a peristyle rather than a Roman villa with a traditional atrium. He reconstructs the plan of the forecourt, showing an entry at one corner of a triangular portico which surrounds a triangular pool; the house is along one side of the triangle immediately facing the entrance.³¹⁴

*To Adelphius the Scholasticus*³¹⁵

1. I write you this letter from the sacred Vanota,³¹⁶ if I do not do the place an injustice by naming it in the local dialect—do the place

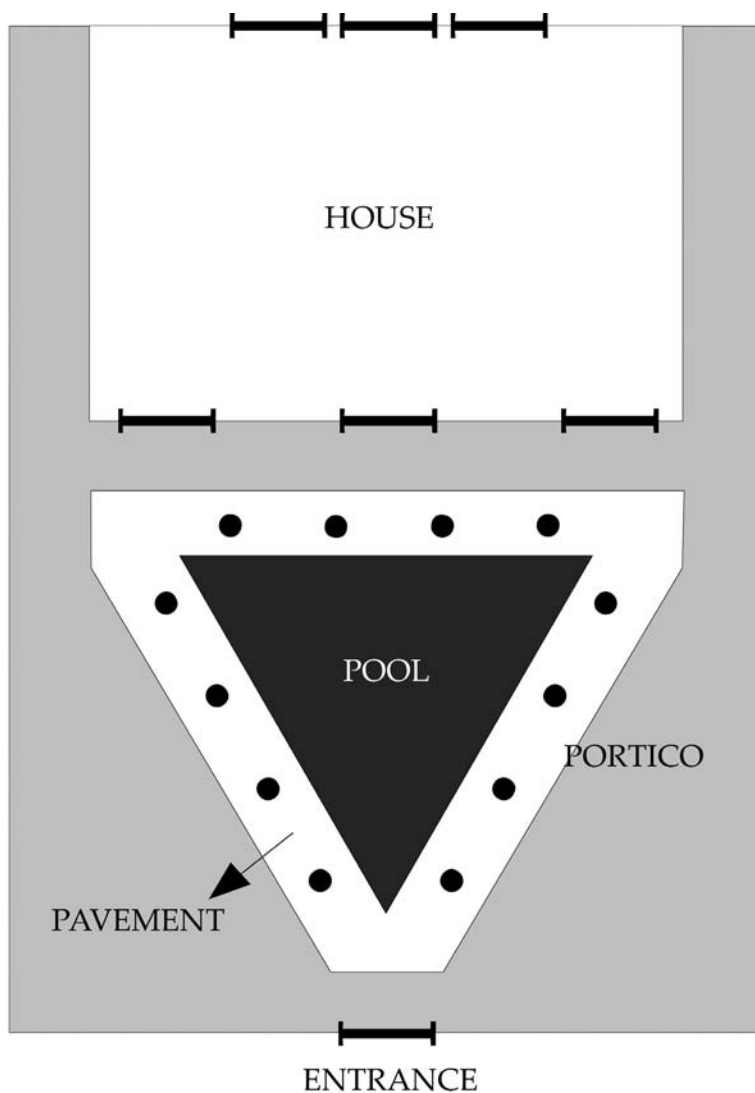
³¹² Pasquali, *Le Lettere*, 125ff.

³¹³ 'Der Zwanzigste Brief des Gregors von Nyssa', *Hermes* 74 (1939), 66–91.

³¹⁴ See also J. J. Rossiter, 'Roman villas in the Greek East and the Villa in Gregory of Nyssa *Ep.* 20', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 2 (1989), 101–110.

³¹⁵ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἀδελφίον (σχολαστικόν P; τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐπιστολαί· ὧν ἡ παροῦσα πρὸς ἀδελφίον σχολαστικόν F.

³¹⁶ ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν Οὐανώτων. According to Nicole Thierry, 'Avanos–Venasa, Cappadoce', *Geographica Byzantina* H. Ahrweiler (ed.) *Byzantinia Sorbonensia*-3 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1981), 119–29, Vanota is to be identified with modern Avanos, two days' staging posts to the south-east of Nyssa, one day's staging post



Forecourt of Adelpheus' Villa, letter 20.

an injustice, I mean, because the name lacks elegance. For indeed this Galatian³¹⁷ title does not hint at the loveliness³¹⁸ of such a place. It has need of the eye to appreciate its loveliness. **2.** For though I have till now seen many things—yes, in many places—and have also apprehended many things through the word-pictures in the accounts of the ancient writers, I consider that all I have seen and all I have heard a trumpery in comparison with the beauty here. **3.** Your Helicon³¹⁹ is nothing, the Isles of the Blest³²⁰ are a fable, the Sicyonian plain³²¹ is a trifle. The accounts of the Peneius are another poetic exaggeration—that river which they say overflows the banks on its sides and so with its rich current fertilizes for the Thessalians their far-famed plains.³²² **4.** Why, what beauty is there in any of these places mentioned that Vanota does not also unfold before us in its own beauties? Whether one seek the natural loveliness of the place, it does not need any of the arts of beautification, or looks to what has been added by artifice, so much has been done and done so well that they are able even to improve the deficiencies of nature.

5. The gifts with which nature favours the place as it adorns the land with unstudied grace are these: down below, the river Halys

west of Caesarea, on the river Halys. See also M. Coindoz and Chr. Jouvenot, 'Avanos vu par Grégoire de Nysse au IV^e siècle', *Dossiers Histoire et Archéologie* 121 (1997), 28–29 with photographs of the site. Gregory uses the pagan term *ἱερὸς*, not the more Christian term *ἅγιος*, since Vanota had been the centre of a major Cappadocian cult to Zeus, second in importance only to the cult at Comana. See W. M. Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire before AD 170*, 2nd ed. London 1893, 443–464. Vanota is also the 'Venasa' of Gregory Nazianzen's Letters 246–248 concerning the strange doings of the deacon Glycerius at the Christian *synod* which seems to be supplanting the pagan festival there.

³¹⁷ Gregory testifies to the continuance of 'Galatian', presumably a Celtic language. Although Vanota is in Cappadocia, the Galatian language seems to have spread east along the Halys valley. Jerome, *In Epist. ad Gal. II*, PL 26, 379B, reports the persistence of the language.

³¹⁸ *χάρις*, (lit. 'grace'), a favourite word in Gregory's vocabulary.

³¹⁹ A long mountain ridge in SW Boeotia, famed for the sanctuary to the Muses in a glen near its summit. See Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece* 9.28–31. Pasquali (GNO 8.2, 69) also gives a reference to Menander 7.30.

³²⁰ Situated at the ends of the earth, the resort of the 'fourth race' of demi-gods and heroes. See Hesiod, *Works and Days* 170 ff., Pindar *Olympian Odes* 2.69–74.

³²¹ Sicyon, a town originally situated at the foot of a triangular acropolis to the west of Corinth, and known for its fertile plains by the sea, long endured as a centre of artistic production. See Aristophanes *Birds* 968; Athenaios *Learned Banquet* 5.219a; Diodoros Sikylos *World History* 8.21.; Libanius mentions it in *Letter* 374; see further Pasquali's note in GNO 8.2, 69.

³²² Gregory may be alluding to the account in Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.129, but cf. also Euripides *Troades* 214; 'Homer' *Batrachomyomachia* 841; Horace *Odes* 1.7.11.

with its banks beautifies the place, gleaming like a golden ribbon on a deep purple robe, by reddening its current with the soil.³²³ **6.** Up above, a thickly wooded mountain extends itself along a great ridge,³²⁴ covered on all sides with oaks, worthy of finding some Homer to sing its praises beyond that of Ithacan Neritus, which the poet calls ‘far-seen with quivering leaves’.³²⁵ **7.** But the native forest, in descending the hill-side meets at its foot the work of husbandry. For immediately vines spread out over the slopes and flanks and hollows at the mountain’s base, cladding all the lower region with colour as with a green mantle. In this climate the season has also enhanced the scene, displaying the divinely sweet treasure of its grapes, which rather surprised me, because the neighbouring country was displaying its fruit still unripe, whereas here it was possible to enjoy the grapes and take one’s fill of their ripeness as much as one wished.

8. Then from afar, like some flare on a great beacon-tower, the loveliness of the buildings shone out upon us. On the left as we entered was the oratory³²⁶ which is being built to the martyrs. Its structure was not yet complete, for it still lacks a roof, yet it was resplendent all the same. **9.** Straight ahead of us on the road were the beauties of the house, one part marked off from another by some elegant contrivance, the projections of the towers and a banquet in preparation among the wide and high-arched rows of plane-trees which crowned the entrance before the gates.

Then lying around the buildings are the Phaeacian gardens—**10.** but let not the beauties of Vanota be insulted by comparison with those. Homer never saw ‘the apple with shining fruit’³²⁷ that we have seen here, which approaches the hue of its own blossom in the high colour of its skin. He never saw a pear whiter than newly-polished ivory. **11.** And what is one to say of the fruit of the peach-tree,³²⁸ its variety and its many forms mingled and synthesized from different strains? For just as those who paint ‘goat-stags’ and ‘centaurs’ and

³²³ In fact, its modern name, Kizil Irmak, means ‘red river.’

³²⁴ Identified by Thierry (‘Avanos–Venasa’, 122) as Idis Dag, 1584 m., though now it is without forest cover.

³²⁵ Homer, *Odyssey* 9.22.

³²⁶ ἐκτήριος οἶκον, or ‘house for prayer’.

³²⁷ Homer, *Odyssey* 7.115.

³²⁸ τῆς Περσικῆς ὀπώρας. One gains the impression that Gregory is speaking of the entire *prunus* genus, the stone-fruits. I myself marvelled at the size and colour of the peaches during a visit to Turkey in 2003.

the like commingle things of different kinds, making themselves wiser than nature,³²⁹ so it is with this fruit. Nature tyrannized by art makes one into an almond, another into a walnut, yet another into a cling-fruit,³³⁰ mingled alike in name and in flavour. Yet with all these, each kind noted even more for their number than their beauty. **12.** But I do not think one can describe in words the arrangement of their planting and the artist's orderly proportions, for truly such a marvel belongs to a draughtsman rather than to a tiller of the ground, so readily has nature fallen in with the wishes of those who make these arrangements.

13. Who could describe adequately in words the path under the overhanging vines and the sweet shade of the grapes and the new kind of wall made of lattices where the roses with their shoots and the vines with their trailers intertwine themselves together, making a wall fortified against attack from the sides, and the cistern of water at the summit of this course, and the fish being bred there? **14.** Through all this time, these who have charge of your nobility's house were eagerly guiding us around with a kind of easy affability, pointing out to us the details over which you had taken pains, as if they were showing courtesy to yourself through us. **15.** There too, one of the lads, like some conjuror, showed us a sight that one does not often come across in nature: for he plunged into the depths and brought up at will whatever fish he had a mind to. They did not slip away at the fisherman's touch, but were tame and submissive under the artist's hands, like well-trained young dogs.

16. Then they led me to a house where I was to take my rest. At least, the entrance signalled a house, but when we came inside the doors it was not a house but a portico that received us. The portico was raised aloft to a great height above a deep pool. Lapped by the water, the pavement which supported the portico in a triangular shape³³¹ was like a vestibule to the delights within. **17.** Once inside, a house occupied the projection of the triangle straight opposite us.³³² It had a lofty roof, lit up on all sides by the sun's rays and decorated with a variety of paintings, so that this spot almost

³²⁹ Plato *Republic* 6.488a (Burnett, Oxford Classical Texts), and Gregory of Nyssa, *against Apollinaris* GNO 3.1, 214.26, *On Perfection* GNO 8.1/178.20–22.

³³⁰ τὸ δωράκινον; a term otherwise unattested in Greek, from the Latin *duracinum*.

³³¹ ἡ κρήπις ἢ τὴν στοὰν ἀνέχουσα τριγώνῳ τῷ σχήματι.

³³² τὴν τοῦ τριγώνου προβολὴν διεδέχετο.

made us forget what we had previously seen. **18.** The house drew us to itself, and again, the portico above the pool was a unique sight. For the superb fish would swim up from the depths to the surface, leaping up into the very air like winged things, as if meaning to mock us land creatures. They would display half their form as they tumbled through the air, and plunge again into the depth. **19.** Still others, following one another in orderly shoals, were a sight for unaccustomed eyes, while elsewhere one might see another shoal packed in a cluster round a morsel of bread, one pushing aside another, here one leaping up, there another diving down.

21. But even this we were made to forget by the grapes that were brought us in baskets of vine-twigs, by the varied display of fruit, the preparations for lunch, the varied dainties and savoury sauces and sweet-cakes and the drinking of toasts and wine-cups. **22.** But now, since we are satisfied and inclined to sleep, I have stationed a scribe beside me and have drafted this babbling letter to your eloquence as if in a dream.³³³ But I pray that I may be able to describe fully to you and those who love you with my own voice and tongue and not with paper and ink the beauties of your home.

LETTER 21 TO ABLABIUS THE BISHOP³³⁴

Ἀβλαβίῳ is attested before Letter 21 only in F, which also adds ἐπισκόπῳ (bishop). Pasquali³³⁵ however asserts that the present letter could not have been sent to a bishop, and so cannot be the bishop Ablabius of **letter 6**. He was perhaps that sophist whom Gregory Nazianzen exhorted to virtue in Letter 233, and to whom Libanius addressed his letters 921 and 1015. Compare a similar social situation in **letter 9**, to Stagirus the Sophist. Maraval wonders³³⁶ whether the Ablabius here is the same to whom the treatise *To Ablabius, that there are not three gods* was addressed, one manuscript of which notes that he was a monk.

Socrates *H.E.* 7.12 tells of an orator Ablabius who was ordained a priest by the Novatian bishop Chrysanthus in the reign of Theodosius II, well after the death of Gregory. He later became bishop of the Novations in Nicaea while continuing to teach rhetoric (!). If this is the same Ablabius

³³³ τῇ λογίῳτι.

³³⁴ Mss.: PFβ; ed.: GNO 8.2, 73–74; tr.: (curtailed and forged as one of Basil's Letters): Letter 10, Def. 1.100–103.

³³⁵ Pasquali, *Le Lettere*, p. 84.

³³⁶ *Lettres*, p. 271, n. 4.

as here, then the identifying suffix 'the bishop' was later added anachronistically by scribes.

Maraval thinks that here Gregory is inviting his correspondent to adopt the monastic life, and indeed, Gregory characteristically uses the term ὑψηλός (lofty, sublime) elsewhere for the virgin/monastic life, and the evidence for a monastic community in Nyssa in **letters 6.10** and **18.5** may be recalled. In this case 'son' means simply 'protégé', not 'natural son'. Another interpretation is that the letter was sent with Ablabius' natural son, Diogenes, as he returned from Gregory to his father. The name change may signify baptism, i.e. the young man has become a full Christian. He has been 'anointed' in baptism/chrisation with the Spirit of Christ (the 'Anointed') under Gregory's influence, possibly while pursuing his studies (under Gregory, in Caesarea, up to c. 371?). *On Virginity* shows a Gregory still practicing as a rhetorician who endeavoured to persuade his students, who had yet to decide on their future, to embrace the life of virginity, i.e. the monastic life under Basil's leadership. In the circles around Basil, the embracing of baptism and commitment to the ascetic life often come to the same thing.

Through his exquisite style, Gregory establishes a fellowship of classical culture with Ablabius, only to courteously invite him to a higher order, that of sharing his son's new faith by becoming a Christian, if not even to becoming a monk. The letter is too brief to be able to propose any firm dating.

*To Ablabius the bishop*³³⁷

The art of hunting doves goes something like this: when those devoted to such an exercise have caught one dove, they tame her, and make a pet of her. Then they anoint her wings with myrrh and release her to join the others outside. Of its own accord the sweet smell of the myrrh renders the flock tame to the one that was sent forth. Attracted by the fragrance, the others all flock together after her and so come homing back.³³⁸

What then do I mean by beginning in this way? That having anointed the wings of his soul with divine perfume, I send forth to your dignity your son Basil, who was once Diogenes,³³⁹ that you too might be joined to him and find the nest which he has built with

³³⁷ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀβλαβίου ἐπισκόπου F. 'Ablabius' is not found in any other ms.

³³⁸ According to Maraval, *Lettres* 271 n. 5, Gregory is reinterpreting an image found in *Geoponica* under the name of Julius Africanus. It describes a method of keeping the doves in the aviary rather than for hunting as such.

³³⁹ β reads: 'that having caught your son Dionysios, who was once Diogenes . . .'. Christians often assumed a new name at Baptism, a custom later extended to monastic profession.

us. Were I to see this happen in my lifetime, and your nobility pass to the higher way of life,³⁴⁰ I would complete the thanksgiving due to God.³⁴¹

LETTER 22 TO THE BISHOPS³⁴²

Letters 22 and 23 very likely go back to a prototype copy-book kept by Gregory himself or his immediate assistants. 'For who in a later period would have understood Letter 22, whose meaning no-one realized until Diekamp? Who would have edited Letter 23, or rather a mere note of introduction?' Pasquali (LXXXII). That this is another letter written in 380 from Sebasteia in the circumstances described in **letter 19** was shown for the first time by Diekamp, 'Die Wahl Gregors von Nyssa', 400–401. Gregory is still in custody, after the turmoil that broke out at the electoral synod for Sebasteia. It is not clear who are the bishops to whom he writes. Are they a new assembly of Armenian bishops gathered to re-examine Gregory's plight and the whole problem of the episcopal succession in Sebasteia, or perhaps fellow Neo-nicenes beyond Armenia Minor who might be expected to intervene in Gregory's cause, perhaps even with Theodosius?

To the bishops

1. For three days the prophet was confined in the whale, so that even Jonah was worn down (cf. Jon 1.17). Now I have been just as long among the unrepentant Ninevites (cf. Jon 1.2), among whom I am captive as in the bowels of the beast. I have not yet been able to be *vomited out* of this maw (Jon 2.10).

2. Pray the Lord, then, to complete his grace (cf. Phil 1.6), that an order for release from this trap might come (cf. Jon 4.11), and that I might regain my own tent and find respite beneath it (cf. Jon 4.5).

LETTER 23 WITHOUT TITLE, ON PHAEDIMUS³⁴³

Letter 23 is found only in P and in F (i.e. G), Pasquali LXXXII. As in the previous letter, the very slight and incidental character of the note argues for its authenticity. It may have been included almost inadvertently in the copy-book Gregory kept of letters written during his confinement in

³⁴⁰ τὸν ὑψηλότερον βίον.

³⁴¹ I.e. for the present circumstance of Diogenes' conversion.

³⁴² Mss.: F; ed.: GNO 8.2, 74.

³⁴³ Mss.: PF; ed. GNO 8.2, 74.

Sebasteia. Here Gregory has hastily written a note of commendation to accompany Phaedimus (otherwise unknown) as he returns to the unnamed addressee, bearing an urgent verbal request from Gregory. By his ‘sparing’ words here Gregory shows himself as capable of writing a ‘laconic’ letter as Gregory Nazianzen recommends.

*Without title*³⁴⁴

I spare you many words, since I spare your labours. Be mindful of your own, and all will go well with Phaedimus.³⁴⁵ There is need of speed in the favour asked: in this is all our plea.³⁴⁶

LETTER 24 TO HERACLEIANUS THE HERETIC³⁴⁷

Letter 24 survives in only one manuscript, F, Pasquali LXXXII. As we now have it, the letter lacks its original introduction and conclusion; only its theological content has been retained. The Syriac translation of **letter 32** was treated in exactly the same way. Similarly **letter 31** was shorn of its beginning and only its church disciplinary content and conclusion preserved.

Hence there is no way of verifying the inscription or ascertaining the identity of the addressee. Gregory Nazianzen addressed his letter 97 to a certain Heracleianus whom he had left behind in Constantinople. His friendly tone does not suggest that he is dealing with a known heretic. Yet even the present letter is not marked by a polemical tone. Gregory expects that his correspondent, if he is a heretic, will be open to a calm, succinct and candid exposition of the Neo-nicene faith in the Holy Trinity. From his overriding concern to include the Holy Spirit as one of the Trinity and his concern to rule out Sabellianism, it may be that Heracleianus is being invited to orthodox faith from Pneumatomachian circles.

Maraval³⁴⁸ notes that C. Klock³⁴⁹ dated this letter to the same period as the *Against the Macedonians* (= Pneumatomachians) because of the similarity

³⁴⁴ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀνεπίγραφος F, absent in P.

³⁴⁵ τῷ Φαιδίμῳ, Pasquali considers that the word (adj. ‘illustrious’) is a person’s name, and in support of that cf. the Phaedimus, bishop of Amasea who ordained Gregory Thaumaturgus to the episcopate (*The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* by Gregory of Nyssa, GNO 10.1, 15A). Jaeger however thinks it may be meant as an adjective and the real name dropped out after it. Gregory puns on the name with use of the verb φείδομαι, ‘spare’.

³⁴⁶ The sentence is so elliptical and allusive its interpretation is open to some conjecture.

³⁴⁷ Mss.: F; ed.: GNO 8.2, 75–79.

³⁴⁸ *Lettres* 279 n. 2.

³⁴⁹ *Untersuchungen zu Stil und Rhythmus bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1984), 61, n. 84.

of themes. T. Ziegler, in an unpublished thesis at Strasbourg in 1987, goes further and places it between *Against the Macedonians* and *Contra Eunomium* III, i.e. in the year 383. On this understanding, Gregory would have met Heracleianus during the council held in Constantinople in 383 which was specially concerned to deal with recalcitrant Eunomians and Pneumatomachians. The discussion of the technical term *hypostasis* here (cf. **letter 5.5c, 8**) reads almost as an *epitome* of its more extended treatment in **letter 35**.

The twofold distinction of the Christian life into the moral part and the accuracy of the dogmas (**24.2**) has its antecedents in Basil's teaching. He had been very impressed in his youth by the strict life of Eustathius and his followers. The discovery of his heterodoxy in the 370s led to a clearer realization that a lack of sound faith was of no advantage, however strict one's behaviour. 'neither a strict way of life by itself is of benefit, except it be illumined by faith in God, nor can an orthodox confession, bereft of good works, commend you to the Lord, but both of these must go together, that *the man of God may be perfect*' Letter 294. Gregory maintains this twofold distinction, only he maintains that the soundness of faith is the governing part of the two (**24.3**). Hence his bold assertion at the beginning of **letter 34**.

*To Heracleianus the heretic*³⁵⁰

1. The word of *sound faith* (Tit 1.13, 2.2) conveys its strength in simplicity to those who welcome the God-inspired utterances (cf. 2 Tim 3.16) with a good disposition. It has no need of subtle interpretation to assist its truth, since it is able to be grasped and understood in itself from the primary tradition.³⁵¹ We received it from the Lord's own voice when he imparted³⁵² the mystery of *salvation in the washing of regeneration* (Tit 3.5). *Go, he said, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you* (Mt 28.18–20).

2. For by distinguishing two elements in the way of life of Christians, one the moral part³⁵³ and the other the accuracy of the dogmas,³⁵⁴ he firmly established the saving dogma in the tradition of³⁵⁵ bap-

³⁵⁰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἡρ. αἰρ. F.

³⁵¹ ἐκ τῆς πρώτης παραδόσεως, i.e. the 'tradition' of the dogma of the Holy Trinity given in the 'tradition' of Baptism. The idea of the Trinity is not a development of latter-day theologians but belongs to the first transmission of the Christian faith from the mouth of the Lord.

³⁵² παραδόντος, the act of tradition/transmission/passing on/delivering.

³⁵³ τὸ ἠθικόν.

³⁵⁴ τὴν τῶν δογμάτων ἀκρίβειαν.

³⁵⁵ παραδόσει.

tism on the one hand, and commanded that our life be remedied through the keeping of his commandments on the other.

3. Now the devil did not interfere with the part concerning the commandments, since it bore a lesser penalty to the soul. But all the zeal of our enemy arose against the governing and greater part³⁵⁶ in order to ensnare the souls of many, so that even if something were rightly done according to the commandments, it would still a gain to him, because those so deceived would be without the help of the great and first hope through the error of dogma.

4. For this reason we urge those who are *working out their own salvation* (Phil 2.12) not to depart from the simplicity of the first utterances of the faith, but as they welcome Father, Son and Holy Spirit into the soul, not to suppose that these are so many names of a single *hypostasis*.³⁵⁷ For it is not possible that the Father be called his own Father,³⁵⁸ for the title is not validly transferred from his own Son to the Father, or to suppose that the Spirit is not one of those named³⁵⁹ so that by addressing the Spirit the hearer is led to the thought of both Father and Son.³⁶⁰

The *hypostasis* individually and exclusively signified by each of the names corresponds³⁶¹ to the titles accorded them. Thus when we heard 'the Father' we have heard the cause of all,³⁶² when we learnt of 'the Son' we were taught the power shining forth from the first cause for the upholding of all things (cf. Heb 1.3); when we acknowledged 'the Spirit', we understood the power that perfects all things brought into being through creation by the Father through the Son.³⁶³

³⁵⁶ I.e. the moral life of Christians cannot be severed from dogma and liturgy.

³⁵⁷ 'Modalism', the position of Marcellus of Ancyra, was fostered in part by a certain lack of clarity as to the relative meanings of *ousia* and *hypostasis*. At the irenic council presided over by Athanasius in 372, the confusion was admitted. It was not long before the Neo-nicene front formed, under Basil's leadership, which made a point of defining the two terms, which position eventually triumphed in the Council of Constantinople, 381.

³⁵⁸ I.e. if the Father and Son were one *hypostasis*, the Father would be identical with the Son, and so be paradoxically named as his own Father. The distinction between the *hypostases* is precisely in their relations.

³⁵⁹ I.e. the position of the *pneumatomachoi*, a late variant of homoiousianism, led by Eustathius of Sebasteia, which balked at according divine status to the Spirit.

³⁶⁰ Thus in a wonderful way, the human subject is led by beginning with the Spirit through the Trinitarian relations to the Father and the Son.

³⁶¹ συνοπακούεται. There is a liturgical resonance in the image here.

³⁶² τοῦ πάντος αἰτίαν.

³⁶³ ἐκ τοῦ πατρός διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ, the classic formulation of the Greek Fathers for

5. The *hypostases* therefore are distinguished from each other without confusion³⁶⁴ in the manner described, that is, of Father and of Son and of Holy Spirit.

But their substance,³⁶⁵ whatever this is—for it is inexpressible in words and cannot be grasped in thought³⁶⁶—is not divided up according to some differentiation³⁶⁷ of nature. Therefore that which is incomprehensible, inconceivable, ungraspable³⁶⁸ by reasonings³⁶⁹ is the same in each of the persons³⁷⁰ of the Trinity in whom we believe.

6. But if one is asked what the Father is according to substance, anyone rightly and truly disposed will confess that the object of enquiry transcends knowledge. So also concerning the *Only-begotten* Son (Jn 1.14): his substance shall not be categorized by any word that can possibly be comprehended, for *who*, it says, *shall recount his generation?* (Is 53.8, Acts 8.33). It is likewise with the Holy Spirit, who is equally unable to be comprehended, which the word of the Lord shows when he says: *You hear his voice; but you do not know where he comes from or where he goes* (Jn 3.8).

7. Accordingly we understand that there is no difference whatever in the incomprehensibility of the three persons.³⁷¹ One is not more incomprehensible and another less, but in the Trinity the principle of incomprehensibility is one. For this reason, guided by this very incomprehensibility and inconceivability, we say that there is no difference in substance to be found in the Holy Trinity apart from the order of persons and the confession of the *hypostases*. The order is handed down in the Gospel, according to which faith³⁷² begins from the Father, passes by means of the Son and ends in the

the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son within the divine Trinity. For something approximating the doctrine behind the western *filioque*, cf. letter 34.

³⁶⁴ ἀσυγχύτως ἀπ' ἀλλήλων διακεχωρισμένοι.

³⁶⁵ οὐσία. Thus Gregory is implicitly saying the Spirit is *homoousios* with Father and Son.

³⁶⁶ ἀλήπτος.

³⁶⁷ ἑτερότητα, otherness, difference.

³⁶⁸ ἀκατάληπτον . . . ἀπερινόητον . . . ἀπεριδρακτον. The three terms are fairly synonymous. The present discussion of the Trinity tests the apophatic limits of language.

³⁶⁹ λογίσμοις. Eunomian rationalism is the target.

³⁷⁰ ἐν τῇ τριάδι πεπιστευμένων προσώπων. Gregory uses *prosopon* as a synonym of *hypostasis*.

³⁷¹ I.e. in their divine essence.

³⁷² ἡ πίστις.

Holy Spirit. But the distinction of persons that appears in the very order of the *hypostases* that has been handed down does not beget confusion in those capable of following the meaning of the word, since the title of the Father manifests its own sense,³⁷³ and again that of the Son, and that of the Holy Spirit its own too, the significations in no way becoming confused with each other.

8. Hence we are baptized as it has been handed down to us, into *Father and Son and Holy Spirit*, and we believe as we are baptized³⁷⁴—for it is fitting that our confession be of one voice with our faith—and we give glory³⁷⁵ as we believe, for it is not natural that worship³⁷⁶ make war against faith, but as we believe, so also we give glory.³⁷⁷

9. Now since our faith is in *Father and Son and Holy Spirit*, faith, worship³⁷⁸ and baptism (cf. Eph 4.5) accord with each other. For this reason the glory of Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not differentiated.

10. The very glory which we render to its own nature is none else than the confession of those goods³⁷⁹ (cf. Mt 19:17) which are proper to the majesty of the divine nature. For we do not have the capacity to add honour to the nature transcending all honour,³⁸⁰ but fulfil the honour by confessing its proper qualities. **11.** Because incorruptibility, eternity, immortality, goodness, power, holiness, wisdom, every majestic and sublime conception belong to each of the persons

³⁷³ ἰδίαν ἔννοταν.

³⁷⁴ In short, *lex orandi lex credendi est*. The liturgical tradition of Baptism seals for the baptized the form of Trinitarian faith. This sourcing of authentic dogma in the baptismal formula was very characteristic of Basil, from his *Contra Eunomium* to his *On the Holy Spirit* 28: 'Faith and Baptism are two inseparably united means of salvation. Faith is perfected in Baptism and the foundation of Baptism is faith. Both are fulfilled in the same names. First we believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and then we are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The profession of faith leads to salvation and Baptism follows, sealing our affirmation.'

³⁷⁵ δοξάζομεν.

³⁷⁶ δόξα, The word can be understood as human opinion or a system of belief. Here Gregory underscores the necessary interdependence of worship and faith, of doxology and dogma.

³⁷⁷ This paragraph uses Basil's phraseology. See Basil, Letter 125, Def. 2.258–271 at 269, Letter 175, Def 2.456–459 at 457 and *On the Holy Spirit* 26.

³⁷⁸ δόξα, clearly means doxology.

³⁷⁹ ἀγαθόν. Gregory combines the philosophical notion of God as the 'supreme good' with the Gospel testimony that God alone is good. Thus the title of 'the good' is acknowledged as proper to each of the hypostases in the Trinity. Cf. Basil, *Homily on Ps 33* (PG 29.368B) and GNyssa, *The Life of Moses*, 7: 'The Divine is itself the good, whose very nature is goodness.' See the discussion of the various senses of the 'good' as applied to God in Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 4.

³⁸⁰ τῇ ἀτιμότητι φύσει, i.e., beyond price or value, unassessable, inestimable.

in the Holy Trinity in whom we believe, it is by naming their proper goods in this way that we give the glory.

12. Moreover, since *all that the Father has the Son has*, and all the goods of the Son are contemplated in the Spirit (cf. Jn 16.15, 17.10), we do not find in the Holy Trinity any inherent distinction in the sublimity of the glory.³⁸¹ To take a bodily comparison, one thing is not loftier and another lowlier since that which is unseen and without form is not comprehended by measurement. So also with power or goodness, no critical difference is found in the Holy Trinity such that one could say there is among them a *variation* (cf. Jm 1.17) between ‘more’ and ‘less’.

Anyone who says that the one is mightier³⁸² than the other tacitly confesses that the one of lesser power is weaker than the one more powerful. This bears the stamp of grossest impiety—to conceive of some weakness or powerlessness, whether in smaller or greater degree, concerning the *only-begotten God* (Jn 1.18) and concerning the Spirit of God. For the word of the truth hands it down that both the Son and the Spirit are perfect in power and goodness and incorruptibility and in all the sublime conceptions. **13.** If we piously confess the perfection of all good in each of the persons in the Holy Trinity in whom we believe, we cannot at the same time say that it is perfect and again call it imperfect by introducing scales of comparison. For to say that there is a lesser with regard to the measure of power or goodness is nothing else than to affirm that in this respect it is imperfect. Therefore if the Son is perfect and the Spirit is also perfect, reason does not conceive a perfect ‘less perfect’ or ‘more perfect’ than the perfect.

14. But we also learn the indivisibility of the glory from the operations.³⁸³ *The Father gives life*, as the gospel says (Jn 5.21) *and the Son also gives life* (Jn 5.21). But the Spirit also gives life according to the testimony of the Lord who says that *it is the Spirit who gives life* (Jn 6.63). **15.** We therefore ought to understand that this power begins³⁸⁴ from the Father, issues³⁸⁵ through the Son, and is perfected³⁸⁶ in the

³⁸¹ τὸ ὕψος τῆς δόξης. Cf. GNyssa *Contra Eunomium* GNO 1.1, 120.10ff.

³⁸² ισχυρότερον.

³⁸³ ἐνεργεῖαι, or ‘activities’, ‘energies’. Cf. the definition of *energeia* in **letter 34**.

³⁸⁴ ἀρχομένην.

³⁸⁵ προϊούσαν.

³⁸⁶ τελειουμένην.

Holy Spirit, for we have learned that all things are from God, and that all is established *through* (cf. Jn 1.2, 10) and *in* the only-begotten (cf. Heb 1.3), and that the power of the Spirit pervades all things (cf. 1 Cor 12.11) *working*³⁸⁷ *all things in everyone* (1 Cor 12.6) *as he wills* (1 Cor 12.11), as the Apostle says.

LETTER 25 TO AMPHILOCHIUS³⁸⁸

This letter is written to Gregory Nazianzen's first cousin, St Amphilochius, who in 373 became bishop and metropolitan of Iconium. The letter offers remarkable insight into the contemporary architecture of a *martyrion* and also into relations between management and skilled labour. The opening phrase indicates that there has already been previous communication on the subject. Now that Gregory has decided to go ahead with the project, he asks Amphilochius to act on his behalf and procure just the right number of suitable workers in Ancyra, some 160 km distant, because he is not satisfied with those available in his own district.

Scholars who have devoted attention to this famous letter include Markell Restle³⁸⁹ and Christoph Klock.³⁹⁰ Reconstructions of the plan appear in several of these articles. Restle's plan is simplified by Nicole Thierry in *La Cappadoce de l'antiquité au Moyen Âge* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), on p. 85. She compares it to the Church at Barata which also features an octagonal tower with arms of the cross coming out from four of the eight sides of the octagon, with blind arches visible outside in the diagonal sides of the octagon. The description here of the external structure of a martyrion is complemented by Gregory's description of the interior adornment of the martyrion at Euchaita, *In Praise of Theodore the blessed martyr*.³⁹¹

Gregory Nazianzen also describes in *Oration* 18.39³⁹² the octagonal church with a central vault built by his father at Nazianzus. Compare also the

³⁸⁷ ἐνεργούσαν, harking back to the 'energies' with which this paragraph begins.

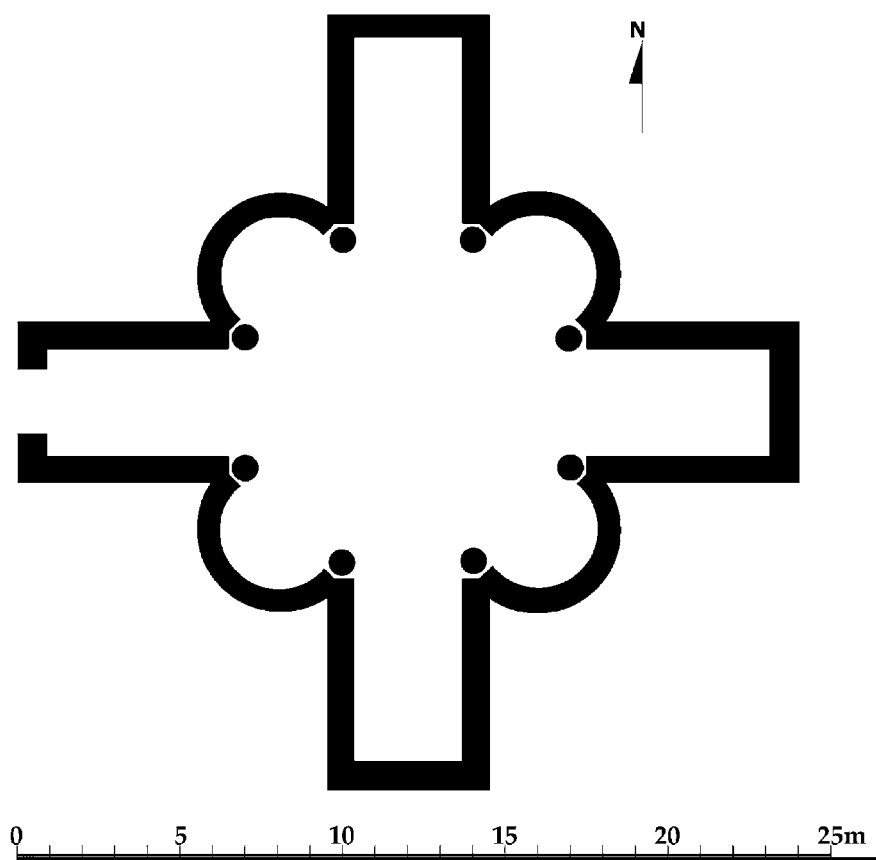
³⁸⁸ Mss.: F; ed.: GNO 8.2, 79–83; tr.: Letter 16, NPNF 2nd Ser. vol. 5, 540–541.

³⁸⁹ *Studien zur frühbyzantinischen Architektur Kappadokiens*, Kommission für die Tabula Imperii Byzantini, Band 3 (Wien: Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaft, 1979), p. 75, fig 142.

³⁹⁰ 'Architektur im Dienste der Heiligenverehrung: Gregor von Nyssa als Kirchenbauer (Ep. 25)', *The Biographical Works of Gregory of Nyssa, Proceedings of the Fifth International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa*, ed. Andreas von Spira (Cambridge Mass., 1984), 161–180. For earlier bibliography see Maraval, *Lettres* p. 290, n. 1 and 291, n. 2.

³⁹¹ GNO *Sermones* Pars II, vol. 10, Tomus I (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 61–71 at 63.

³⁹² For analysis and reconstructions see A. Birnbaum 'De Templo Nazianzeno a Gregorio Theologo descripto', *Eos* 13 (1907), 30–39, and 'die Oktogone von Antiochia, Nazianz und Nyssa: Rekonstruktionseversuche', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* 36 (1913), 181–209, and C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (Eaglewood Cliffs N.J.: 1972), 26–27.



Groundplan of Octagonal *Martyrion*, letter 25.

description of an octagonal church built at Pedachthoe near Sebasteia in the early 4th century.³⁹³

The present author visited several sites connected with the Cappadocian Fathers in March 2006. The 'Red Church' about a kilometre from the village of Sivrihisar and marking the location of Arianzus, is clearly very ancient, perhaps as old as the 6th century. Its masonry was of high quality and stable enough to have lasted for many centuries. It features a central octagon, internally a dome on squinches (the 'Armenian squinch' a widespread expedient for constructing a dome before the invention of the dome on pendentives). Octagonal towers with conical caps which internally are domes on squinches continued as an architectural trope in the Christian era throughout Armenia and Georgia, and in the Islamic era under the Seljuks. To cite just one example: the centre of Kayseri (Caesarea) is fairly studded with such structures. Most of them are *kumbeti* or tombs. One, today a museum, even had a cruciform plan on the scale of Gregory's martyrion, but this time the octagon/dome was on pendentives, so there was no space for diagonal sides in between the quadrilateral structures.

Restle³⁹⁴ connects Gregory's indictment for financial irregularities in 375/376 with the expenses incurred in the project outlined here, and on this basis would date the letter to 373–375. But Maraval is not convinced, doubting that Gregory would publish a letter that would recall the old accusations made against him. Besides, this letter scarcely shows a Gregory of a mind to be reckless with finances! He is guided here by the necessity of keeping to what is affordable and of keeping strict accounts.

As to dating, we will follow Maraval, who simply assigns the letter to the period of Gregory's ascendancy, i.e. after 381.

*To Amphilochius*³⁹⁵

1. I am now persuaded that by God's grace the project of the *martyrion* is well in hand. May it find your favour! The task we have in hand will attain its end by God's power who is able whenever he speaks to translate word into deed. Since, as the Apostle says *He who has begun a good work will also perfect it* (Phil 1.6) I pray you: be an imitator of the great Paul³⁹⁶ in this too, and lead our hopes forward to the deed by sending us as many workers as are needed for the task.

³⁹³ In *Passio Athenogenis* 13 (*La Passion inédite de S. Athénogène de Pédachtoë en Cappadoce* ed. P. Maraval, Subsidia Hagiographica 75 (Brussels, 1990), 20–85.

³⁹⁴ Op. cit., p. 80.

³⁹⁵ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀμφιλοχίῳ F.

³⁹⁶ Amphilochius is bishop of a church founded by St Paul himself (Acts 14.1–3, Gal 1.8–11).

2. May your perfection grasp the dimensions by which the whole task shall be calculated by means of an estimate. To this end I will try to explain to you the whole plan in a verbal description.

3. The form of the oratory is that of a cross, accomplished, as you would expect, by four structures all around. But the joints of the structures <do not>³⁹⁷ overlap each another as we see in the cruciform pattern elsewhere. Instead, there lies within the cross a circle, divided into eight angles—I call the octagonal figure a circle because of its perimeter—in such a way that the four sides of the octagon which diametrically face each another link the central circle by means of arches to the four adjacent structures. 4. The four other sides of the octagon which lie between the quadrilateral structures will not themselves be extended to form structures,³⁹⁸ but attached to each of them will be a semicircular structure in the form of a shell³⁹⁹ terminating in an arch above. Thus there will be eight arches in all by which the parallel quadrilateral and semicircular structures will be joined, side by side, in the middle.

5. Further in from the diagonal piers⁴⁰⁰ there shall stand an equal number of columns, both for ornament and for strength. These also shall bear arches over them fashioned to match in size those on the outside. 6. But above these eight arches, by means of a tier of windows placed over them, the octagonal structure will be raised to the height of four cubits.⁴⁰¹ What rises from that level will be shaped conically like a spinning-top, as the form of the vault⁴⁰² tapers the opening from a wide span to a sharp point.⁴⁰³

³⁹⁷ The negation is very plausibly restored by Klock, 'Architektur im Dienste der Heiligenverehrung', 167; it makes sense of the strong adversative, *ἀλλὰ*, with which the sentence begins and with the subsequent data.

³⁹⁸ οὐδε αὐταὶ κατὰ τὸ συνεξῆς εἰς οἴκους ἀποταθήσονται. Gregory means that the diagonal 'sides' between the arms of the cross will not be extended into small 'naves' as it were, but be completed simply by semicircular 'apses' or niches.

³⁹⁹ κοχλοειδῶς, i.e. oyster-shell, i.e. the diagonal arches are not quite 'blind' arches, but are hollowed out as a 'semi-circular structure', as in a small apse or niche.

⁴⁰⁰ πεσσῶν, the mass of the walls as they converge on the central space centre at the eight points of the octagon. They are to have eight columns placed in front of them facing the central space.

⁴⁰¹ About 1.85 m. (Maraval 292, n. 2).

⁴⁰² εἰλήσεως, or perhaps 'vortex'.

⁴⁰³ Thus the structure is capped by an octagonal pyramid, in the manner that became so characteristic of eastern Anatolian architecture for centuries. See Thierry, op. cit., Chapitre VIII 'Architecture Religieuse' 77–95. Photographs of churches with octagonal towers over squinches appear 85–87; see especially p. 85 'la plan

7. As to the dimensions below, the width of each of the quadrilateral structures will be eight cubits, their length half as much again,⁴⁰⁴ the height as much as the proportion of the width allows.

8. It will also be as much in the semicircular structures. The distance between the piers extends in the same way to eight cubits. As far as the sweep of the compass describes, with its point fixed in the middle of the side and extended to its furthest limit, this will be its breadth.⁴⁰⁵ The height will be determined in this case also by the proportion of the width. **9.** And the thickness of the wall, beyond the spaces measured internally, is three feet,⁴⁰⁶ running around the whole building.

10. I have overwhelmed your goodness with such detail for a purpose, that you may be able to estimate accurately the total number of square feet from the thickness of the walls and the internal spaces. Because your intellect is versatile in all matters and succeeds by God's grace in whatever direction you choose, you will be able, by a fine calculation, to estimate the sum compounded of all the parts, and so send us neither more nor fewer stonemasons than our need requires. **11.** And, please, I draw your attention especially to this point, that some of them be skilled in making a vault without wooden framework, for I am informed that when it is built in this way it is more durable than when made to rest on beams. It is the scarcity of wood that leads us to this method of roofing the whole fabric with stone, since there is no timber for roofing in the vicinity.

12. Let your truthful soul be aware that some here were negotiating⁴⁰⁷ with me to furnish thirty workers for a gold piece⁴⁰⁸ for dressed stonework—with, of course, a stipulated ration along with

reconstitué du Martyrium de Nysse (d'après Restle 1979)'. See also Christina Maranci, *Medieval Armenian Architecture* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), diagrams on pp. 38, 54, and especially 'The "Original" Armenian Church Form', 86–97 and the photographs of the Church at Mastara, 89.

⁴⁰⁴ About 3.9 m. x 5.75 m. (Maraval 293, n. 4).

⁴⁰⁵ I am not sure whether this means that the distance from mid-side to the end of one of the quadrilateral structures also forms the radius of the octagonal 'circle' in the centre.

⁴⁰⁶ About 90 cm, a foot being between 29 and 32 cm (Maraval 295, n. 1).

⁴⁰⁷ Adopting Keil's amendment συνετίθεντο, for the συνέθεντο of F.

⁴⁰⁸ χρῶσινον = aureus, later called solidus, the standard Roman gold coin; the proposed rate was one gold piece for thirty workers, per day. Cyril Mango, *Architecture Byzantine* (Paris, 1981), 27, calculates the annual revenue for a stonemason at 10 solidi, which was well above the annual average wage, at this period, of 5–7 solidi.

the gold piece. But such preparation of the stones is not possible for us.⁴⁰⁹ Rather, the material for our building will be clay brick and chance stones, so that there is no need for them to spend time⁴¹⁰ on fitting together harmoniously the sides of the stones.

Now, as far as skill and fair dealing in the matter of wages are concerned, I know that the workers in your region are better for our need than those that can be hired here. **13.** The stonecutters' task is not only for the eight pillars, which need to be adorned with a beautiful facing, but the task also requires moulded bases on square plinths,⁴¹¹ and capitals sculpted in the Corinthian style. **14.** The porch too will be of marble finished with suitable ornament. The doorways that are placed upon them will be adorned with the kind of engravings that are customary for beautifying the moulding of the entablature. We shall of course provide the materials for all these. The form that is to be impressed on the material skill will bestow. In addition there will also be a surrounding portico of not less than forty pillars,⁴¹² these also of stonecutters' work throughout.

15. Now if my account has described the task accurately, may it be possible for your sanctity when you realize the need, to relieve us completely of anxiety concerning the workers. If the worker wants to contract with us, let a definite measure of work, as far as possible, be fixed each day, lest he pass the time idly, and subsequently, though he has no work to show for it, demands payment for having worked for us for so many days.

16. I know that in being so particular about the contracts we shall seem to many to be nigglers. But please forbear, for that *Mammon* (cf. Mt 6.24) which has often heard many hard things from me, has at last betaken himself as far from us as he can go, being disgusted,

⁴⁰⁹ I.e. financially, following Maraval's amendment and Restle's interpretation: ἡμῖν δὲ ἡ τοιαύτη τῶν λίθων «κατασκευὴ» οὐ πάρεστιν. Otherwise ἡ τοιαύτη lacks a corresponding noun. The traditional understanding is 'We do not have such stones available', but as Maraval explains, 296, n. 2, this is clearly not the case, as the very readiness of workers for such a contract, and the work shortly envisaged on the columns and the porch bears witness.

⁴¹⁰ And hence costing more money.

⁴¹¹ βωμοειδεῖς σπείρας; the σπείρα is the moulding at the base of a column, in Latin the *torus*.

⁴¹² This detail suggests dedication to the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, with whom Gregory and his family long had connections (see letter 1 and notes). See C. Klock (cited above) 161, and Maraval, *Lettres* 298 n. 2.

I suppose, at the nonsense that is constantly directed against him, and has fortified himself against us by *an unbridgeable gulf*—I mean, poverty—so that neither can he come to me, nor can I pass over to him (Lk 16.26). That is why I so stress the fair dealing of the workmen, so that we may be able to finish the task before us unhindered by poverty—that laudable and desirable evil.

17. There is in all this of course a certain element of jest. Yet when you negotiate with the men, O man of God, promise boldly as far as it is possible and lawful, that they will meet with fair dealing from us and be paid their full wages: for we shall give all and keep nothing back, in the same way that, through your prayers, God also opens to us his hand of blessing.

LETTER 26 FROM THE SOPHIST STAGIRIUS TO GREGORY⁴¹³

Letters 26–28 are also transmitted in the corpus of Basil's letters. The present letter appears in a truncated form as Letter 347, 'Libanius to Basil' (Def. 4.314–315). Paul Maas discovered letters 26–28 in their original form, attributed to Gregory and Stagirus, in codex P.⁴¹⁴ Pasquali (LXX) does not hesitate to call the one who insinuated these letters among Basil's letters a 'forger'.

Stagirus is also the addressee of letter **10**. He is a sophist, i.e. rhetorician who has found a position as a *scholasticus*, perhaps one of Gregory's colleagues in his old profession. He is possibly not a Christian, since he and Gregory resort to a shared Hellenism to establish their affinity. Here Stagirus appears to allude playfully to Gregory's controversial manner in the *Contra Eunomium*, which would date the exchange of letters to 382 or later.

*From the sophist Stagirus to Gregory the bishop*⁴¹⁵

1. All bishops are creatures difficult to catch in a net.⁴¹⁶ But you, to the extent that you have surpassed the others in eloquence, also inspire a fear that you may somehow prove staunch against my

⁴¹³ Mss.: PA; ed.: GNO 8.2, 83–84.

⁴¹⁴ *Berliner Sitzungsberichte* (1912) 988–998, 1118; see Pasquali IX, LXXXVI.

⁴¹⁵ As preserved in P; Λιβάνιος Βασιλείῳ Λ.

⁴¹⁶ Πᾶς μὲν ἐπίσκοπος δυσγρίπιστον πρᾶγμα. δυσγρίπισον is a hapax, the meaning of which, according to Maraval (301, n. 3), is not 'grasping', but 'hard to take in a net'. In other words, all bishops are slippery fish, hard to pin down. The tone is one of light jesting.

request. **2a.** But now, dear sir, do lay aside your expertise in counter-argument⁴¹⁷ and apply yourself to the mode of generosity.

2b. Since we are in need of rafters with which to roof the house—though another sophist would have said ‘joists’ or ‘stakes’, preening himself with fine little words rather than accommodating himself to the need—do give your nod to the gift of several hundred. **2c.** Of course, if you wanted to cut them from Paradise, you have the power to do so.⁴¹⁸ But I, unless you furnish them, shall spend the winter in the open air.

2d. So do be large-hearted dear sir, and send a letter to the presbyter of Osiana⁴¹⁹ ordering the gift.⁴²⁰

LETTER 27 REPLY OF HOLY GREGORY TO THE SOPHIST⁴²¹

This letter is a response to the preceding one. Here Gregory amply returns Stagirius’ jesting in kind. The whole letter is a study in light irony. He ends by reporting that Dios, evidently the parish priest of Osiana, has undertaken to fulfil Strategius’ request for building materials.

*Reply of holy Gregory to the sophist*⁴²²

1. If ‘making a gain’ is called ‘catching in a net’, and the expression has this meaning which your sophistic power has selected for us from the secret sanctuary of Plato,⁴²³ consider, dear sir, who is

⁴¹⁷ This possibly refers to Gregory’s polemic against Eunomius. The sentence is absent in A.

⁴¹⁸ A droll reference to Gregory’s sacred powers as bishop?

⁴¹⁹ πρὸς τὸν Ὀσινηῶν πρεσβύτερον. Osiana (or Osiena) was the first staging post on the road from Nyssa to Caesarea—GNO 8.2, 84, note. Today it is Esksehir (officially Ovaören), forty miles due west of Nevsehir. See F. Hild & M. Restle *Tabula Imperii Byzantini, II. Kappadokien*, 250–251, with a plan of the ruins. This detail disproves Libanius’ authorship. He never took up residence in Osiana!

⁴²⁰ This last sentence is also missing in A. Like the omission previously noted, it was a topical reference edited out by the forger to facilitate the inclusion of the letter in the Basil/Libanius corpus.

⁴²¹ Mss.: PA; ed.: GNO 8.2, 84–85, appearing among Basil’s letters: Letter 348, ‘Basil to Libanius’, Def. 4.314–317. See the previous letter for notes on textual transmission.

⁴²² As preserved in P; Βασιλείος Λιβάνιῳ Λ.

⁴²³ γρυίσσειν is not found, as such, in Plato, and Gregory knows it. He returns Stagirius’ jesting, mocking his term and his rhetorical art, by affecting to think he culled it from some unknown work of Plato’s. The banter of these letters is in the style of the lighter part of Plato’s dialogues, e.g. addressing each other as ὦ θαυμάσιε.

less likely to be taken in a net,⁴²⁴ we, who are staked in so nimbly by your epistolary power,⁴²⁵ or the race of sophists, whose art consists in levying a toll upon words? **2.** For who among the bishops has imposed a tax on his words? Who has made his disciples pay fees? But this is what sophists plume themselves on, putting up their own wisdom as merchandise just as the harvesters of honey do with their honey-combs.

3. You see what you are doing with the mysterious, musical power of your words? You have roused even me, an old man, to skip about and yes, you stir those who do not know how to dance, to dance!

4. But I have ordered to be given to you, who make a parade of your Persian declamations,⁴²⁶ rafters of equal number with the soldiers who fought at Thermopylae,⁴²⁷ all of good length, and, according to your Homer, ‘casting a long shadow’,⁴²⁸ which the sacred Dios⁴²⁹ has solemnly promised me to deliver safe and sound,⁴³⁰ saying that he would send, not ten thousand or twenty thousand rafters, but just as many as the petitioner could use and would be serviceable to the recipient.

LETTER 28 [ON THE ROSE AND ITS THORNS]⁴³¹

The letter postdates Gregory’s journey to Palestine and Arabia in late 381, rather than his trip to Antioch in 379. It therefore belongs to the same

⁴²⁴ μᾶλλον ἀγρίπιστος, P; μᾶλλον δυσγρίπιστος, Λ, ‘more grasping’.

⁴²⁵ Gregory’s counter-jibe to Stagirus’ caricature of his episcopal ‘power’.

⁴²⁶ σοι τῷ κατὰ τὰς μελέτας τοῖς Μηδικοῖς ἐμπομπεύοντι ἰσαριθμούς.

⁴²⁷ The reference is to the respective numbers of Persians and Greeks who fought at the battle of Thermopylae, Herodotus 7.60, 202 (where the number of Spartans is given as 300), 226, 8.24–25.

⁴²⁸ δολιχοσκίους, cf. Iliad 3.346 and 355, et al.

⁴²⁹ ὁ ἱερὸς διος, PΛ^R. ἱερὸς δεῖνα, Wilamowitz’ emendation from ἱερὸς δ’ Λ^{Mon}Λ^{Bar}, accepted by Pasquali, and understood adverbially with ‘promise’. Other variants in Λ mss are ἀλφαῖος (a proper name, cf. Mk 2:14 and Mat 10:3), Εὐστάθιος and Δονάτος. Maraval, however, accepts the best mss, pointing out (305, n.4) that there was a Caesarean martyr who had this name. Gregory therefore is referring to the Christian priest at Osiana, whose name is Dios, but uses the more classical term for priest, *hieros*, rather than the usual Christian term of *presbyter*.

⁴³⁰ The remainder of the letter is missing in Λ.

⁴³¹ Mss.: PΛ; ed.: GNO 8.2, 85–86. P records no addressee, Λ has ‘Basil to Libanius’. See Letter 26 for note on textual transmission, and Pasquali LXXXII. The earlier part of this letter up to p. 86 line 10: ἐκκαίουσα, appears in the Basilian corpus as Letter 342, Def. 4.304–307. It appears as letter 1587 in the Libanian corpus.

period as **letter 3**. Gregory uses the classical Hellenist manner to win his correspondent, who is clearly of a secular and cultured class. He appears to have written to complain that Gregory has not fulfilled some task he entrusted to him before the latter's long journey south. Gregory first elegantly disarms his correspondent's anger, and adds at the end, almost incidentally as it were, that that was no basis for his ire anyway, and that there are even witnesses that the behest was fulfilled exactly.

1. Those who are inclined to the rose, as is fitting for lovers of the beautiful, are not at all annoyed by the thorns from the midst of which the flower emerges. Indeed I once heard someone say of them, playfully or perhaps even seriously, something like this, that nature has also made these slender thorns to sprout that they might serve lovers of the flower the way that the lovers' jabs do,⁴³² inciting those picking the flowers to greater desire by the not unwelcome pricks.

2. Now why do I introduce the rose into my letter? Surely you do not have to learn from us, if you only recall that letter of yours which, though it contained the flower of your discourse and unfolded to us the fountain of your eloquence, yet prickled with certain reproaches and charges against us. **3.** But to me, even the thorns of your words are a pleasure, making me burn with greater longing for your friendship. So then do write and continue to write in whatever way it may appeal to you to do, whether with dignity, as you usually do, or provokingly with reproaches.

4. It will be wholly our concern never to provide you with occasions for your blessed reproach, as we have not even now provided you with any, because before our travels through the East⁴³³ we accomplished everything according to your desire and owed by us to justice. Of this our most reverent and mutual brother Evagrius⁴³⁴ is witness, who also opened this letter⁴³⁵ at the same time and learnt all from your own words, for he happened to be present. He is

⁴³² καθάπερ ἐρωτικά τινα κνίσματα τοῖς ἐρασταῖς τοῦ ἀνθους. The mild erotic imagery was conventional theme in the second sophistic.

⁴³³ πρὸ τῆς ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑφάν ἀποδημίας. ἡ ἑφά = Oriens, the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, generally Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine and their hinterland. Gregory refers to his journey to Palestine and to Arabia; see Letters 2, 3, and 19. Again, because of its topical reference this whole paragraph is omitted to fit it for the Basilian corpus.

⁴³⁴ It is by no means settled who this Evagrius might be, since several persons of this name appear in the letters of the Cappadocians.

⁴³⁵ I.e. the Letter to which Gregory is now replying.

also witness of our zeal for what is just and of the good will of those managing your interests in these affairs.

LETTER 29 TO HIS BROTHER PETER ON THE *CONTRA EUNOMIUM*⁴³⁶

Letter 29 and the reply to it, **letter 30**, were not originally part of the corpus of the *Contra Eunomium* but were transmitted as private letters. They were attached to the *Contra Eunomium* as a preface (Pasquali IX) in about the 11th century. Presently they survive independently in only one codex, F, in a collection of minor letters (cf. Pasquali LXXIX).

Letter 29 was written in 380/381, after Gregory had returned from 'Armenia', i.e. once the awkward detention in Sebasteia reported by Gregory in **letter 19** was behind him.⁴³⁷

The earlier part of the letter (**29.1–6**) has the character of a genuine private letter to his brother Peter, in which Gregory uses the first person singular, but the later part (**29.7–9**) in which Gregory switches to the plural of modesty, seems to more intentionally preface the *Contra Eunomium* I.

The burden of the letter is that Gregory is worried that polemics and personal attachment to Basil may have led him to express himself intemperately in the first instalment of his treatise against Eunomius—a not unjustified concern, one might think. He asks his brother to judge whether he should go ahead with publication or should restrict its circulation.

It is noteworthy that Gregory writes in a highly cultured, hypotactic style of Greek to Peter, whose education was wholly guided by Macrina. Despite the inscription in two manuscripts, no term of address is used within the letter that might be expected towards a bishop, as Peter himself uses such, for example, in the following letter. Probably Peter is not yet bishop of Sebasteia at the time of these letters, and is still the monastic superior at Annisa. Though Peter had been not present at their sister's death and funeral, and had missed Gregory's presence then,⁴³⁸ Gregory speaks here of Peter's advice to him. Undoubtedly he had the chance to visit and speak with his brother during the affairs at Ibora (**19.12**) and later too, perhaps after the release from the distressing situation in Sebasteia, unless Peter himself had visited him there.

*To his brother Peter, Bishop of Sebasteia*⁴³⁹

1. On my return from Armenia I was scarcely able with difficulty to find a little leisure to attend to the care of the body and to assem-

⁴³⁶ Mss.: FLZSV; ed. GNO 8.2, 87–91; tr.: Letter 1, *Contra Eunomium* I, NPNF Ser. 2, vol. 5, 33.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Jaeger, *prolegomenorum at libros contra Eunomium*.

⁴³⁸ VSM 18.1 (GNO 8.1.387, Maraval 192).

⁴³⁹ Only one of Pasquali's mss. add refer to Peter as bishop of Sebasteia: V, to

ble the notes of my reply to Eunomius, as your wisdom advised. Thus my work is composed at last as a complete treatise and has now become a compact volume.

2. Yet I have not written against both his works. I did not find sufficient leisure, because the one who lent me the book of the heresy very soon and with great discourtesy sent for it again, allowing me no time to copy it or study it at leisure. Having only seventeen days available, I was not able in so short a time to deal adequately with both his works.⁴⁴⁰

3. Owing to its having got about—I do not know how—that we have taken pains to answer this blasphemous riposte, I have been constantly besieged by the many people who maintain some zeal for the truth. But for counsel in these matters—whether I should entrust this work to the hearing of the many or take some other course, I thought it best to prefer you in your wisdom before all others.⁴⁴¹

4. What makes me hesitate is this. When the holy Basil fell asleep and I inherited the controversy of Eunomius, while *my heart was still hot with passion* (Ps 38.4) and in anguish at this common misfortune of the churches, Eunomius not only wrote on the various topics which might pass as a defence of his own doctrine, but expended the greater part of his energy on laboriously written out abuses against our father.⁴⁴² This is why, provoked as I was at his insolent ravings, I displayed a certain indignation and animosity against the writer.

5. The public have perhaps pardoned us in other respects, because we have maintained a fitting patience in meeting unruly attacks and have practised as far as possible that moderate manner which the holy man taught us. But I fear that as a result of what we have

which Marval later added B. LZ simply have ‘to his brother Peter’, and F has simply ‘to Peter’.

⁴⁴⁰ Gregory’s *Contra Eunomium* I–II, deal with the first part of Eunomius’s book *Apologia for his Apologia*, which was a reply to Basil’s *Contra Eunomium*. Shortly after the present juncture, Gregory wrote his *Contra Eunomium* III dealing with the second part of Eunomius’s book.

⁴⁴¹ The lofty esteem in which Gregory held his sister Macrina casts its glow on his brother Peter, Macrina’s protégé and zealous collaborator in the monastic community at Annisa. Peter remained always faithful to Macrina’s and Basil’s monastic ideal, and Gregory looks to him for reliable spiritual counsel.

⁴⁴² Not Basil Senior, but St Basil the Great, spiritual father to all, and ‘father’ in this sense to his own brothers and sisters (except perhaps Macrina).

now written against the adversary we may be regarded by chance readers as a raw recruit, easily provoked by the abuses of the insolent. **6.** What may perhaps disarm the suspicion that this is what we are like, is that our display of anger was not on our own behalf, but on account of the things said against our father, and that in such cases moderation may be less pardonable than asperity.

7. If the first part of the discourse seems somewhat outside the controversy, such an arrangement of the discourse will, I think, be approved by one who judges carefully. For neither should the reputation of the great one have been left undefended, smeared as it was with the antagonist's blasphemies, nor the battle on his behalf be allowed to intrude sporadically throughout the discourse.

8. Besides, if anyone reasons about it accurately, these pages are also part of the controversy. For our opponent's discourse has two distinct aims: to insult us and to controvert sound doctrine, and it was necessary that our discourse also range itself on both fronts. But for the sake of clarity, and in order that the thread of the enquiries on matters of doctrine should not be chopped up by parentheses of answers to his accusations, we have perforce divided our treatment into two parts. In the first part we have devoted ourselves to refuting the charges levelled against us. After that we have grappled as best we could with what he has said against the doctrine.

9. Our discourse contains not only a rebuttal of their heretical views, but also an instruction and an exposition of our doctrines. For it would be shameful and we would be entirely wanting in spirit if, while our enemies do not hide their absurdity, we for our part were not bold with the truth.

10. May the Lord preserve you sound, in soul and in body, for the Church.⁴⁴³

LETTER 30 REPLY OF PETER TO GREGORY⁴⁴⁴

This letter is Peter's response to the previous letter, and hence written in late 380–early 381. It is a most precious document indeed, the only extant

⁴⁴³ This whole sentence is missing in LV; 'for/in the Church' missing in S.

⁴⁴⁴ Mss.: FLZSBV; ed.: GNO 8.2, 89–91; tr.: Letter 2, *Contra Eunomium* I, NPNF Ser. 2, vol. 5, 34. See notes to Letter 29 on the textual transmission.

writing we have from the hand of Peter,⁴⁴⁵ the last-born of Emmelia and Basil the elder's remarkable children. Here he urges his brother to publish *Contra Eunomium* I, and to press on with refuting the rest of Eunomius' apologia. It is interesting to compare Peter's style with that of his two brothers, and of his sister Macrina, if her prayer before death in the VSM⁴⁴⁶ can be any reflection of her manner. The letter is a tissue of Scriptural passages and allusions, innocent of classical *topoi*, and is far closer to Basil's style in dealing with ascetics and with Macrina's style, than with Gregory's. Yet Peter himself has acquired no small rhetorical skill.

It is by no means obvious from the internal evidence of **letters 29 and 30** that Peter has as yet become the bishop of Sebasteia. That more likely followed the Neo-nicene triumph at Council of Constantiople in 381, with all its enactments for the churches of the Eastern empire. Therefore Peter was probably still monastic father and the superior of the community at Annisa when he penned this letter.

Peter, Bishop of Sebasteia, to Gregory of Nyssa his brother

1. Peter to his most pious brother Gregory, greetings in the Lord.

When I consulted your sanctity's letter and discerned in your discourse against the heresy your zeal for the truth and for our holy father, I deemed that the discourse was not simply a work of your own power, but of him who ordained that the truth *should be spoken among his own servants*⁴⁴⁷ (cf. Acts 4.29). **2.** And if I say that it is well to attribute this plea for the truth to the *Spirit of truth* himself (cf. Jn 14.17), so it also seems to me that this zeal against *sound faith* (Tit 1.13, 2.2) should be referred not to Eunomius but to the *father of the lie* himself (cf. Jn 8.44). **3.** Indeed, that *murderer from the beginning* (Jn 8.44) who speaks in him, seems to have zealously whetted the sword against himself. For if he had not been so bold against the truth, no one would have stirred you to this plea on behalf of the doctrines of piety. But in order especially to expose the rottenness and the flimsiness of their doctrine, he who *catches the wise in their own cleverness* (Job 5.13, 1 Cor 3.19) allowed them both to bray against the truth and to practise themselves vainly on this vain speechwriting.

⁴⁴⁵ R. Pouchet has proposed that Peter may have been the author of the second, spurious part of Basil's Letter 197 (Def. 3.90–99 at 94–99): *Basile le Grand et son univers d'amis d'après sa correspondance*, *Studia Ephemeridis 'Augustinianum'* 36, Rome 1992, 519–525.

⁴⁴⁶ VSM 26, GNO 8.1, 397–398, Maraval 218–224.

⁴⁴⁷ δούλοις, FLZS, δόγμασι (opinions views), BV.

4. But since *he who has begun a good work will bring it to completion* (Phil 1.6), do not weary of serving *the power of the Spirit* (Lk 4.14, Rom 15.13) or leave the victory over those who campaign against Christ's glory half-won. Imitate your true father instead, who, like Phineas the zealous, pierced through both teacher and disciple with the single stroke of his refutation (cf. Num 25.7). With the outstretched arm of your discourse thrust *the sword of the Spirit* (Eph 6.17) through both these heretical books, lest the serpent, though *shattered on the head* (Ps 73.13), frighten those of simpler mind by the quiver in his tail. For if the first arguments have been dealt with and the last remain unexamined, the public will consider that they still retain some strength against the truth.⁴⁴⁸

5. The strong feeling you show in your discourse will be as acceptable as salt to the palate of the soul. As *bread cannot be eaten*, according to Job, *without salt* (Job 6:6), so the discourse which is not seasoned with the astringents⁴⁴⁹ of God's word will never wake and never move desire.

6. Take heart then, because you are providing a noble example to succeeding generations, teaching well-disposed children how they should regard their good fathers. For if you had shown such zeal against those who insulted his reputation while the holy one went about in this human life, you would probably not have escaped the accusation of appearing to be some kind of flatterer. Now however, you show such good will towards him who led you to the light through his spiritual travail⁴⁵⁰ (cf. Gal 4.19), that your zeal for the departed and your indignation against his enemies show clearly the genuineness and truth of your soul. Farewell!

⁴⁴⁸ In short, Peter exhorts Gregory to continue writing until he refutes Eunomius' second book.

⁴⁴⁹ ἀμυκτικώτεροις FZS. μυστικώτεροις, LBV, 'inmost sentiments'. ἀμυκτικώτεροις derives from ἀμυκτικός, ἥ, ον used by Soranus (2nd cent. AD) for medicines of an 'irritant' character—see LSJ Lexicon. In the context Peter refers to the stimulant, pungent qualities—the 'salt'—of God's word. Peter shows the same familiarity with medical terminology that is characteristic of all the Cappadocians, but it seems it was an unfamiliar term to some later scribes. On Gregory's familiarity with medicine see letter 13.1 and note.

⁴⁵⁰ According to Peter's valuable testimony, Basil was instrumental in Gregory's 'conversion', when he left his secular career and entered upon service of the Church.

SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECTION

The letters in this selection are presented in the order of their recognition, or their being proposed for recognition as works of Gregory of Nyssa. The edition from which each translation has been made is noted in the prefatory note to each letter.

LETTER 31 TO LETOIUS BISHOP OF MELITENE

Gregory's authorship of the letter to Letoius has always been acknowledged. It was due to a decision by Pasquali (ix) and by other editors following him, that it was not included in recent editions of his letters, a decision based on a narrow conception of the epistolary genre. Because the letter was taken up so soon into the body of Eastern church canons, Pasquali and others left it to editors of canonical literature. However it is clear that it was originally a genuine letter, called forth in the same sort of circumstances as Basil's letters 188, 199 and 217 to Amphilochius, i.e. it is the considered response of an authoritative senior bishop to the questions of a new and inexperienced bishop on the Church's administration of penance. It has as much right to be included here among Gregory's letters as Basil's 'canonical' letters have been among his. Moreover, this important letter has never appeared before in English.

That this letter was preserved, such as it is, is due to a decision by an unknown canonist in Constantinople who in late 6th century (c. 580) revised John Scholasticus' pioneering work in codification of Church law, the *Synagoge L titularum*. Scholasticus had added certain letters of Basil to Amphilochius to the decisions of church councils. The unknown canonist took a cue from this and in his own work, the *Synagoge* in XIV titles (also called *Syntagma XIV titularum*), added excerpts from a wider range of Church Fathers.¹ One of these was Gregory of Nyssa's letter to Letoius in the form we now know it, minus its original introduction and divided into eight 'canons'. All the subsequent transmission of the letter stems from this edition.

Professor Ekkehard Mühlenberg of Gottingen's critical edition of this letter is forthcoming in GNO, but he sent me his text to use and invited my queries—a relationship of senior to junior not unlike that of Gregory and Letoius.

There have been three notable earlier editions of the letter:

¹ See Gallagher, *Church Law and Church Order in Rome and Byzantium*, 38.

1. The edition published by A. Morell in Paris in 1638, and republished by Migne in *Patrologia Graeca* 45, 221–236.
2. Joannes Baptista Pitra, *Iuris Ecclesiastici Graecorum Historia et Monumenta*, Tom. I a primo p. C. n. ad VI saeculum, pp. 619–629 (with correction on page 668), Romae 1864 (reprinted 1963).
3. Périclès Pierre Joannou (ed. with French translation): *Discipline générale antique (IV^e–IX^e s.)*, tome 2: *Les canons des Pères Grecs*, published in the series *Fonti*, Fascicolo IX, by Pontificia Commissione per la Redazione del Codice di Diritto Canonico Orientale (Grottaferrata: Tipografia Italo—Orientale, 1963), pp. 203–226.

Mühlenberg found many corrigenda in Pitra's apparatus and more than 300 in Joannou's apparatus, which he considers useless. The establishment of a reliable edition therefore is greatly needed. The text he used was first edited by Hilda Polack in 1962. It was reviewed by Jaeger, but since Polack never submitted a *praefatio* it was not printed. Subsequent attempts to complete the work in the 1970s were also defeated. Finally Mühlenberg undertook the task, beginning with correcting errors in Polack's manuscript. He found it necessary to re-collate all the manuscripts, and is now finishing the *praefatio* in which some 130 manuscripts are surveyed. The selection of the witnesses for use in the apparatus is Hilda Pollack's, with three later additions (F, M, T) to represent the spectrum of the early text tradition. Mühlenberg's forthcoming critical edition of the letter to Letoius is based on the following manuscripts, listed in the order of their antiquity:

- Π** Patmensis 172, parchment, 9th cent.
- V** Vaticanus graecus 843, parchment, 9th cent.
- D** Dublinensis Collegii Trinitatis 200, parchment, 10th cent.
- F** Romanus Vallicellianus graecus F. 10, parchment, 10th cent.
- H** Hierosolymitanus monasterii τοῦ Σταυροῦ 2, parchment, 10th cent.
- R** Vaticanus graecus 1589, parchment, 10th cent.
- M** Mediolanensis Ambrosianus C 135 inf., parchment, 11th cent.
- T** Oxoniensis Bodleianus Auct. T.2.6, parchment, 11th cent.
- B** Mediolanensis Ambrosianus B 107 sup., parchment, 12th cent.
- A** Londinensis Musei Britannici graecus Old Royal 16.D.1, parchment, 12th cent.
- S** Vaticanus graecus 1907, paper, 12th cent.
- v** the vulgate text of the 1638 Paris edition, republished in *P.G.* 45, 221–236.

Manuscripts A and S, and two other mss. not included in the apparatus, are collections of Gregory of Nyssa's treatises. Mühlenberg thinks that the text type preserved in them is a revised form of an uncial ms. which was scarcely legible. The oldest form of the letter, i.e. as it appears in the *Synagoge* in XIV titles appears in Π, but it is also found in the Nomocanon XIV titulorum, originating c. 630 AD and later revised by Photius in 883 AD.

At the time of writing Mühlenberg had not yet articulated the text families. He was not intending to present a stemma because of the sheer abundance of mss. of the 10th (16) and 11th (15+) centuries.

Ekkehard Mühlenberg's edited text occupies pp. 47–61. In translating, I essentially trusted his text, taking special note to observe the differences from v. The titles at the head of each section and the alphabetic sub-versification are my own.

The letter as it stands clearly lacks its original epistolary introduction, which is a loss since Gregory was such a specialist in writing captivating introductions. Compare the loss of introduction and conclusion in **letter 24** and in the Syriac translation of **letter 32**. The epistolary conclusion however has been preserved, and this allows us, together with the contents of the letter to build some picture of the letter's provenance and purpose.

The addressee, Letoius, was Otreius' successor as bishop of Melitene. Gregory wrote **letters 10** and **18** to Otreius, who was a participant in the council of 381 and was named with Gregory and Helladius in the imperial edict *Cod. Theod* 16.1.3 as a guarantor of orthodoxy in eastern Anatolia and Syria. Gregory surely felt his passing deeply and very probably mentioned him in the lost introduction. Letoius wrote a letter to Gregory which included a series of questions on the administration of penance in the Church. This letter is Gregory's reply. The exchange gives the impression of coming early, even very early in Letoius' term as bishop. From the opening remarks (**1a**), it might be guessed that Letoius is yet to face his first Easter as bishop. He was seeking authoritative help in fulfilling his duties at that focal point of the Church's year. These duties included the conferral of baptism and the readmission to communion of penitents who had completed their due penance (**1b**).

The dating of Letoius' accession to the episcopate is a matter of some conjecture. He appears in Theodoret *Church History* 4.10 in association with Amphilochius of Iconium and Flavian of Antioch in combating the spread of Messalianism among the monks. He is mentioned also in Theodoret's *Haeticarum fabularum compendium* PG 83, 335–556 at 432, and by Photius in *Bibl. Cod.* 52. Photius reports his reading of a letter sent to Flavian from a synod convened at Side in Lycaonia by Amphilochius at which Messalianism was condemned as heretical. Karl Holl, *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grössen Kappadoziern*, Tübingen, 1904, dated this synod of Side as early as 383, with Flavian's synod at Antioch following afterward. More recently however, Klaus Fitschen, in *Messalianismus und Antimessealianismus*, FKDG 71 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 29–37 places Flavian's council first, and dates the Synod of Side well into the 390s.

The maturity of doctrine and phraseology in this letter and Gregory's mention of his old age in relation to his protégé points perhaps to a later rather than an earlier dating for this letter, so that the year 390 or thereabouts it might be reasonably nominated. The phrase so characteristically Gregory's, 'erotic power and disposition' (**1k**) also appears in **letter 36**, which Pouchet dates to Gregory's final years. Another common element in these two letters is 'the brothers' (**8d**, **36.3**). In fact **letter 36** offers a plausible scenario for the writing of this letter too. Gregory has been visited by 'brothers', i.e. monks, who bear a letter and a verbal message from Letoius. The 'haste' with which Gregory writes is explained if the brothers are

waiting to take back a written reply with them. Gregory quickly consults the Church documents he has to hand concerning the penances assigned to various sins.

What to make of Gregory's 'begetting' of Letoius 'according to God' (8d)? This language of spiritual fatherhood is in accord with several NT passages, and means that Gregory had been instrumental in bringing Letoius to Christ, in Baptism, monastic life or priestly orders or in some combination of the same. Compare two contemporaries, Ambrose of Milan and Nectarius of Constantinople, both advanced to the episcopate from the catechumenate. It is possible that Gregory persuaded Letoius to service of the church and brought him through Baptism to priestly orders. Basil had earlier exercised a similar fatherhood towards Amphilochius, and even towards Gregory himself, for in **letter 30.6** Peter reminds Gregory how Basil once brought him to the light through his spiritual travail.

One of the admirable features of this letter is the preamble in which Gregory succinctly and eloquently sketches a spiritual anthropology which is the perspective in which to approach the administration of penance in the church. The ruling idea is not that of enacting the legal decisions of a tribunal but that of a spiritual physician diagnosing and treating spiritual illnesses and verifying progress by appropriate signs of spiritual health. This is seen most of all in terms of the penitent's own *prohairesis*, his choice or will. The process of penance is meant to be a spiritual education. It is set squarely in terms of the human vocation to resist the slide into vice and to contend for virtue and beyond that in terms of the Christian vocation to transformation in Christ that is valid for all Christians at all times.

Unfortunately no pagination of the forthcoming critical edition is available as yet. The headings and the subversification using letters of the alphabet are mine.

*Canonical Letter of the holy Gregory to Letoius among the saints,
bishop of Melitene²*

1. *The psychology of vice and the rationale of repentance*

a. This too is one of the contributions to the holy festival,³ that we understand the lawful and canonical dispensation concerning those who have erred, so that every infirmity of the soul arising from whatever sin is cured. **b.** For since this universal feast of creation, which is celebrated every year throughout the whole world at the return

² 'among the saints' omitted in S, 'concerning the definition of penalties' added at the end in v.

³ The Pasch, or Easter, when catechumens were admitted to Baptism, Chrismation and Holy Communion, and penitents who had completed their appointed time of penance were readmitted to Holy Communion.

of the annual cycle also celebrates the resurrection of him who has fallen—for sin is a fall and resurrection is the raising up again from the fall of sin—it would be well that on this day that we bring forward⁴ not only those who are transformed⁵ by the grace of God through *the washing of regeneration* (Tit. 3.5), but lead also those who through repentance and conversion are rising up again *from dead works to the living way* (Heb. 9.14), to the saving hope from which they had been estranged.

c. It is no minor task to dispense with a correct and approved judgment the words regarding such as these, in accordance with the announcement of the prophet that we should *dispense words with judgment* (Ps 111.5), so that as the saying has it, *he may not be shaken forever but the righteous be in eternal remembrance* (cf. Ps 111.6).

d. Just as in the cure of the body the medical art has but one aim,⁶ to restore the patient to health, although the form of treatment will vary—for since there is a variety of infirmities the method of cure is adapted to each disease—so also, since there is a great variety of passions in the disease of the soul, the cure undertaken will necessarily take many forms, the healing being accomplished in a way that corresponds to the passion. Whatever the skilled method necessary for the present problem is the approach we shall employ.

e. According to the primary division there are three aspects in what concerns the soul: reason, desire and spiritedness.⁷ In these three consist all the upright deeds of those who live according to virtue, and the falls of those who lapse into vice. It therefore behoves anyone who intends to apply the appropriate cure to the diseased part of the soul, to examine first in what the condition consists, and then to apply the cure to the patient accordingly. f. Otherwise through ignorance of the method of cure, the diseased part may be left aside while the cure is applied to another part, as we surely see in the

⁴ I.e. reconcile qualified penitents by absolution and participation in Holy Communion.

⁵ μεταστοιχειουμένους. Gregory uses the same term for the transformation of the elements of bread and wine in the Divine Liturgy, in *Catechetical Discourse* 37.

⁶ On Gregory's esteem of the medical art, see letter 13.1 and note.

⁷ τὸ τε λογικὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπιθυμητικὸν καὶ τὸ θυμοειδές, or 'the rational, the concupiscible and the irascible', though the latter concerns something more elemental than anger as such. The source of this psychology is Plato's *The Republic* 440, especially 440e–441a. Compare also other expressions of a tripartite soul in the image of a charioteer commanding two horses, *Phaedrus* 246a–b, 253d–254e.

case of many physicians who aggravate the disease they are attempting to cure through their ignorance of the primary condition.⁸ **g.** Infirmary, for example, often comes through a diminution of heat, since those who are badly affected by an excess of cold are benefited by whatever warms and foment. Yet if they injudiciously apply the same remedy which is applied reasonably to these, to those instead who are inflamed with immoderate heat, they only bring about a condition more difficult to cure. It is therefore considered most necessary for physicians that they understand the specific elements, so that whatever is against nature in each of those elements that are disposed for good or for ill may be corrected.

h. So then, having recourse to the same distinction in what regards the soul, we shall take this general idea as the principle and basis for the appropriate cure of the passions. Accordingly, the particular character of the soul's movements is divided into three as we said: reason, desire and spiritedness.

i. The uprightness of the reasoning part of the soul consists in a pious conception in what concerns the divine, a discerning estimate of what is beautiful and what is sordid,⁹ and a clear and unconfused view concerning the nature of subsistent realities: what is worthy of choice among the things that exist and what is to be abhorred and rejected. **j.** Yet again, vice is contemplated in this part when there is impiety in what concerns the divine, a failure to judge that which is truly beautiful, a muddled and erring conception of the nature of things, with the result that, as the Scripture says, one takes *the light for darkness and the darkness for light* (Is 5.20).

k. That movement of the desiring part is virtuous which leads the yearning upwards to the really desirable and the truly beautiful,¹⁰ so that if there is in us any erotic power and disposition¹¹ it is wholly engaged in that direction, persuaded that nothing else is worth seeking in one's own nature except virtue and a nature that overflows

⁸ Cf. Basil's discussions on the pathologies of vice and sin, SR 29, 81, 229, 289, 301. In SR 289, he stresses that the primary cause of a behaviour is sometimes hidden and must be probed and properly diagnosed before an effective cure of the soul be undertaken.

⁹ τοῦ καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ, or 'the good and the bad', thought the 'beautiful' aspect of τὸ καλός, has full weight in Gregory's thinking.

¹⁰ ἀνάγεσθαι τὸν πόθον, i.e. the movement of virtue is always anagogical, leading upward.

¹¹ ἐρωτικὴ δύναμις τε καὶ διάθεσις.

with virtue. **l.** Now the aberration of this part is sin, when someone transfers his desire towards an insubstantial vanity¹² or towards the superficial bloom of bodies, from which comes the love of money, the love of honours, the love of pleasure and all such things that are associated with this kind of vice.

m. Yet again, the uprightness of the spirited disposition is enmity towards vice and warfare against the passions, and the stirring of the soul to bravery so that it does not shrink from the things considered by the many to be fearful, but *resists sin even unto blood* (Heb. 12.4) and despises the threat of death and painful punishments. By parting itself from the keenest of pleasures it rises superior once and for all to those things which through custom and opinion detain the many in pleasure, because it wages battle for faith and for virtue.

n. The falling away of this part is evident in all these things: in envy, hatred, rage, insults, brawls, and an inclination to quarrel with and fight off others and to prolong the memory of injury received which leads to many murders and much bloodshed. Since undisciplined reasoning finds no way to use its weapon¹³ with advantage, it turns the sharp edge of the iron against itself¹⁴ and the weapon given us by God for defence is used viciously for destruction.

2. *The vices of reason: those who desert the faith in Christ*

Once we have made these distinctions in the manner outlined above, those sins which pertain to the reasoning part of the soul are judged more sternly by the Fathers and merit a greater and longer and more arduous conversion, as in the case of someone who denies the faith in Christ, whether in favour of Judaism or idolatry or Manichaeism, or by openly deserting¹⁵ to some other such form of atheism.

One who has run off to such a wickedness of his own accord, but then condemns himself, has for the period of his repentance the rest of his life. When the mystic prayer is celebrated¹⁶ he shall not at any stage be allowed to do homage to God together with the people, but shall pray alone and shall be wholly excluded from the communion

¹² ἀνυπόστατον κενοδοξίαν, fleeting/frivolous vainglory.

¹³ I.e. the gift of the spirited part of the soul, as appears shortly.

¹⁴ I.e. in spiritual self-destruction.

¹⁵ I.e. publicly known apostasy.

¹⁶ μυστικῆς ἐπιτελουμένη ἑυχῆς, i.e. the Divine Liturgy, the Eucharist.

of the sacraments.¹⁷ Only in the hour of his exodus shall he be allowed a share in the Sacrament. If he happens unexpectedly to survive, he shall resume living under the same judgment, not partaking of the mystic sacraments until his exodus.

Those however who were tormented by tortures and harsh punishments¹⁸ shall receive a penalty for a set period, for the holy Fathers treated them with loving kindness in this way because their fall was not of the soul, but due rather to the weakness of the body which did not hold out against the torments. This is why desertion under duress and pain is allotted the same period of conversion as those who have sinned through fornication.

3. *The vices of reason: those who resort to sorcerers and mediums*

a. Those who go off to sorcerers,¹⁹ mediums or to some uncleanness of demons and who undertake to practice certain spells, shall be closely questioned and examined whether they remained believers in Christ but were constrained by some necessity to that sin, some affliction or unbearable loss having implanted this impulse in them, or whether they ran off to an alliance with the demons wholly contemptuous of the testimony of our faith. **b.** For if they did this in rejection of the faith and because they no longer believed that the one to whom the Christians do homage is God, then clearly they shall incur the penalty of deserters.

c. But if some insupportable necessity cowed their weakness of soul and led them on, so that they were beguiled by some delusory hope, in such a case the same loving-kindness shall be shown them as for those who in the time of confession were unable to hold out against torment.

4. *The vices of desire and pleasure*

a. Of those who fall into sin through desire and pleasure, this is the division: the one is called adultery and the other fornication. But it pleases some who think more accurately²⁰ to consider the offence of

¹⁷ τῆς δε χοινωνίας τῶν ἁγιασμάτων. Though it is in the plural, *the* sacrament is meant, the the Eucharistic communion. Such a penitent remained at most in the vestibule petitioning the prayers of the faithful for the rest of his life.

¹⁸ I.e. who denied their faith in Christ unwillingly, under severe duress.

¹⁹ γοήτας, covering practitioners of witchcraft and magic.

²⁰ Gregory seems to tacitly mean himself. He goes on to interpret the concept of adultery, as any union which is alien to the integrity of one's bodily nature.

fornication also as adultery, since there is only one legitimate union, that of a wife with a husband, and a husband with a wife.²¹ **b.** Accordingly all that is not legitimate certainly transgresses the law, and anyone who lays claim to what is not proper to himself,²² clearly lays claim to something alien. For one *helpmate* is given to man by God (cf. Gen 2.20–22) and one *head* is assigned to a woman (cf. 1 Cor 11.3). Therefore *if someone possesses his own vessel*, as the divine Apostle calls it, *that is proper to himself* (1 Thess 4.4),²³ the law of nature concedes a just use.²⁴ **c.** But if someone turns aside from what is proper to himself, he shall become something wholly alien. For all that is not proper to each person is alien to him, even if he does not acknowledge what it is that is mastering him.

d. Fornication therefore is shown to be not far from the offence of adultery by those who look more accurately into its character, for the divine Scripture says, *do not be intimate with the stranger*²⁵ (Prov 5.20). But since there has been some indulgence by the Fathers towards the weaker, the offence is therefore judged according to the generic division, with the result that any satisfaction of desire which occurs without injury to someone else²⁶ is reckoned as fornication, whereas adultery is a plot and an injury against another.²⁷

e. Yet both bestiality and pederasty are also reckoned in this latter division,²⁸ because these are also an adultery against nature. For the injury is in regard to what is alien and contrary to nature. Since this is the division assigned to this type of sin too, the general cure applies, that a person is purified from the passionate craving for pleasures of these kinds through penitence.

²¹ μία ἐστὶν ἡ νόμιμος συζυγία, καὶ γυναικὶ πρὸς ἄνδρα, καὶ ἀνδρὶ πρὸς γυναῖκα. Since the Greek terms do double duty, the latter part may also be translated: 'that of a woman with a man, and a man with a woman'. This principle of heterosexual monogamy as the only form of legitimate sexual union, rules out not only polygamy and heterosexual unions outside marriage but also and especially acts of homosexuality and bestiality as Gregory goes on to explain (31.4e).

²² ὁ μὴ τὸ ἴδιον ἔχων, ἴδιον = what pertains to oneself, one's own.

²³ 'Vessel' refers to sexual organ; i.e. he maintains his sexual faculties in integrity and self-control. In other words, he is committed to the virtue of chastity.

²⁴ I.e. in heterosexual monogamy.

²⁵ πρὸς ἄλλοτρίαν, lit. *alien*, meaning a woman not one's wife. Gregory also interprets it to mean anything alien to the integrity of one's nature.

²⁶ I.e. a third party.

²⁷ Again, meaning a third party, namely a spouse.

²⁸ I.e. the division of adultery just mentioned.

f. But with regard to those polluted by fornication²⁹ a certain injury is lacking in this sin. This is why the time of conversion prescribed for those defiled by adultery is double and for the other forbidden vices too, that is, bestiality and craving for the male, since the sin in these cases, as I was saying is doubled. For one sin consists in the unlawful pleasure and another in the injury with regard to what is alien.

g. There is also a certain variation in the measure of repentance for those who sin through pleasure and it is this. If someone is prompted of his own accord to declare his sin, that is, of his own impulse he willingly becomes the accuser of his hidden activities, he has already begun the cure of his passion and shown evidence of a change for the better, and consequently finds lenience in the penalties assigned. **h.** But one who is caught out in his vice, or who is exposed unwillingly through some suspicion or accusation shall be assigned a prolonged conversion, so that he is admitted to the communion of the sacraments only when he is thoroughly purified.

i. Well then, the canon is this:³⁰ those polluted by fornication are entirely excluded from the prayer³¹ for three years, participate in the hearing only³² for three years, and for another three years pray with those who prostrate during their conversion,³³ and then they partake of the sacraments. **j.** In the case of those who apply themselves more earnestly to their conversion and who demonstrate their return to the good through their manner of life, it is permitted the one who dispenses according to what is fitting³⁴ to shorten the time of hearing by ecclesiastical dispensation and advance them more quickly to conversion, and again to shorten this time and grant the communion more quickly, as he by his own examination ascertains the condition of the one undergoing treatment. For if it is *forbidden to cast*

²⁹ I.e. heterosexual acts between the unmarried.

³⁰ ὁ κανὼν, 'rule', hence 'Canon' or church law.

³¹ I.e. not be admitted to assembly at all, but remain in the vestibule asking the prayers of the faithful.

³² I.e. leave the Divine Liturgy after the readings and homily. They become the equivalent of *catechumens* again.

³³ 'Conversion' seems to be used for that stage of the penance in which penitents stay for the entire Divine Liturgy but as non-communicant *prostrators*. Thus there are in all three stages of penance before final readmission to Holy Communion.

³⁴ I.e. normally the bishop, or a worthy presbyter appointed by him to preside over the administration of penance; cf. Sozomen's interesting account in *H.E.* 7.16.

the pearl before swine (Matt 7.5), it is also absurd to withhold *the pearl of great price* (Matt 13.46) from one who is already purified and freed from passion.

k. But the lawless deeds of adultery and the other kinds of uncleanness discussed above shall all be cured with the same sentence that applies to the defilement of fornication, only the time is doubled. But in this case too, the disposition of the one being cured shall be monitored in the same way that applies to those snared in the pollution of fornication, to see whether their participation in the good³⁵ takes place more quickly or slowly.

5. *Vices of the spirited part of the soul*

a. Besides these it remains to bring the spirited part of the soul under examination, when it has strayed from the good and fallen into sin through the use of anger.

b. Though there are many acts of anger which give effect to sin, and all of them bad, it has somehow pleased our Fathers not to make too close a reckoning of them or to consider the cure of all the faults that come of anger worthy of much attention, although Scripture forbids not only the blow, but also all insult and blasphemy and any other such acts perpetrated by anger. They only made provision in their penalties for the defilement of murder.

c. This kind of vice is divided by the difference between the voluntary and the involuntary. Among these murder is voluntary in the first instance when someone brazenly premeditates and prepares the execution of this defiling deed. **d.** Next, it is also considered among voluntary acts when someone in a brawl and a fight strikes and is struck, and inflicts a mortal blow on another by his own hand. For someone already mastered by anger and gratifying the impulse of wrath would not admit into mind at the moment of passion anything that could cut off the evil. Therefore the murder that results from a brawl is regarded as a deed of choice and not as arising by chance. **e.** Those acting involuntarily however have clear signs, as

³⁵ From 4j and the next sentence, the 'good' refers to virtue. It is also used in this sense in VSM 13.8 (GNO 8.1, 383, Maraval, 180). Yet it also shades into partaking of Holy Communion (5h), the common element being that God alone is good, and that participation in the good by virtue and by the Sacrament is participation in God.

when someone is engaged in something else and perpetrates a fatal act by accident.

f. Among these cases, the time of penance assigned to murder is extended threefold for those who through conversion are being cured of a voluntary defilement. There are three times nine years, a nine year period being fixed for each rank, so that a nine year period is spent in complete segregation, barred from the Church. Just as many years continue in hearing, when he listens only to the teachers and the Scriptures, and then after he is deemed worthy of being among the people, he prays with those who prostrate during their conversion, and so he attains to participation in the Sacrament. **g.** Yet even in such a case, there will be the same monitoring by the one dispensing the Church,³⁶ and in proportion to his conversion the duration of his penalty shall be shortened, so that instead of nine years for each rank, it may become eight or seven or six, or even five years, if the magnitude of his conversion outstrips the time, and if in his zeal for amendment he surpasses those who have undertaken to purify themselves from their stains more easily in the lengthy period prescribed.

h. The involuntary deed is judged pardonable, but hardly commendable. I have said this to make it clear that because he has been involved in the taint of murder even if unwillingly, the canon declares him already contaminated by the defiling deed and expelled from the priestly grace. It was judged fitting that the same time of purification assigned to simple fornication also be assigned to those who have committed murder involuntarily. In this case too the will of the penitent is assessed, so that if his conversion proves credible, the number of years is not strictly observed and he is led through a shortened time to restoration with the church and to a participation in the Good.

i. But if someone is departing this life without having fulfilled the time fixed by the canons, the loving-kindness of the Fathers bids that he participate in the sacraments lest he be sent on that last and great journey deprived of viaticum. But if he has partaken of the Sacrament and then returns again to life, let him continue in the appointed time at the stage he had reached when in view of necessity he was granted Communion.

³⁶ τοῦ οἰκονομοῦντος τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

6. *A compound vice: avarice*

a. But as to that alternative species of *idolatry*—for this is what the divine Apostle calls avarice (Eph 5.5, Col 3.5)—I do not know why it has been overlooked by our Fathers and not assigned a cure. Indeed this vice seems to be a passion of the threefold state of the soul. The reasoning, erring in its judgment of the beautiful, imagines that the beautiful is in material things and hence it does not look above to the immaterial for the beautiful, and the desire inclines to what is below and falls away from that which truly is worth wanting, and the combative and spirited disposition too finds many opportunities in this kind of sin.

b. In a word then, this disease corresponds to the apostolic definition of avarice. For the divine Apostle not only declares it idolatry, but even *the root of all evils* (1 Tim 6.10). Nevertheless, this kind of disease has been overlooked, not been examined and not assigned treatment. Hence this kind of infirmity has flourished in the churches, and no-one is concerned whether any of those being advanced to the clergy are themselves tainted with this kind of idolatry.³⁷

c. But since such cases have been passed over by our Fathers, we deem it sufficient on the principle of public teaching, that in purifying the infirmities of avarice through the word we treat them, as far as possible, as a kind of compound condition, and consider only theft, grave-robbing and sacrilege as morbid conditions, for such is the tradition that has come down to us from the succession of the Fathers. **d.** Nevertheless in the divine Scripture both *usury* (Lev. 25.37) and financial *oppression* (Ps 72.14) are among the things forbidden, and drawing off another's property as one's own through being in a dominant position, even if such a practice happens to be under cover of a business transaction.

e. If we for our part are worthy of belief in what concerns the authority of canons, we will add to what has already been said the canonical sentence for acts acknowledged to be forbidden.

f. Theft then is divided into robbery³⁸ and burglary. Though the aim of both is to carry off what belongs to others, there is a great

³⁷ For a conspicuous case of episcopal simony (bartering church office) which had repercussions in Gregory's own life, see the introduction to letter 17.

³⁸ ληστεῖαν, i.e. theft by direct violence, as in banditry, highway robbery and piracy.

difference of approach between the two. For the robber even takes the taint of murder as an ally of his purpose, and prepares for it with arms and assistants and opportunities of place, so that if through repentance such a one brings himself back to the church of God he must be subject to the sentence for those who commit homicide.

g. But if anyone by secret pilfering appropriates what is another's and then declares his offence in confession to the priest, his infirmity is cured through zeal for the opposite of this passion, I mean through bestowing what he has on the poor, in order that by the relinquishing of what he has he may show himself purified of the disease of avarice. And if he has nothing, the Apostle bids him expiate such a passion through bodily labour. For we have this saying: *Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work, that he may be able to give to those who have need* (Eph 4.28).

7. *The vices of avarice: grave-robbing*

a. Grave-robbing is divided into what is pardonable and what is not pardonable. If someone spares what deserves respect and leaves the interred body intact, so that the shame of our nature is not exposed to the sun, and only makes use of stones from the facing of the tomb in order to build something else, this of course is not commendable. Custom however treats it as pardonable, when the material has been transferred to something more important and of common benefit.

b. But raking through the ash of the body returned to dust and shifting the bones in the hope of finding some valuable buried along with them, this is condemned with the same sentence as simple fornication, according to the distinction set out in the foregoing discussion. The dispenser of course may shorten the time of the penalty fixed in the canons if he observes from his life the healing of the one undergoing treatment.

8. *The vices of avarice: sacrilege*

a. In the ancient Scripture, sacrilege was assigned no lighter condemnation than that for murder, inasmuch as one found guilty of murder and one who purloined the things dedicated to God incurred the same punishment of stoning. **b.** But in the custom of the church there has come about, I do not know how, a certain condescension and accommodation, so that a lighter purification is fixed for such

a disease, for the tradition of the Fathers has assigned to such as these a penalty of lesser duration than for adultery.

c. Always in dealing with this kind of fault it is fitting before all else to note what may be the disposition of the one undergoing cure and not suppose that the time itself is adequate for the cure—for what healing is effected merely through time?—but rather the will of the one who is healing himself through his own conversion.

Conclusion

d. These things which we have sent to you, O man of God, were put together in great haste from what was at hand, since we had to respond to the instructions of the brothers with haste. Do not cease to offer the customary prayers to God for us. **e.** For as a noble son you owe it to one who begot you according to God (cf. 1 Cor 4.15, 2 Cor 7.9) to sustain him in his old age with your prayers, according to the commandment of him who charged us to honour our parents, *that it may go well with you and that may live long in the land* (Ex 20.12 + Deut 5.16). You will surely then receive this letter as a priestly token and not dishonour a hospitable offering, though it may fall somewhat short of the measure of your noble nature.

LETTER 32 TO THE MONK PHILIP

The existence of an otherwise lost letter of St Gregory of Nyssa *To the monk Philip* was long known from three surviving fragments: the title, the *incipit*, and a short theological passage preserved by the outstanding 6th century defender of Chalcedon, Leontius of Jerusalem (*Contra Monophysitas*, P.G. 86.2, 1828B) and in the 8th century by St John Damascene (*Contra Jacobitas*, P.G. 94.1496C). Gollandi included Damascene's version among Gregory's works at P.G. 46.1112C.

The recovery of a full text of this letter is a marvel of gradual collaborative research over two centuries. In the early 18th cent. the father of modern Syriac studies, Joseph Assemani, discovered in a ms. (Paris. Syr. 303) a copy of the *Exposition of the Faith* by John Maron, a monk of *Beit Maroun* in Apamea who in c. 686 was elected the first Maronite patriarch of Antioch (d. 707). In his treatise Maron included a Syriac translation of much of this letter, introducing it as 'From Gregory brother of Mar Basil, in the letter he sent to the monk Philip on the objection the Arians bring against us'. It covers **32.4–14a** (... free of error) below. Gustave Bardy drew renewed attention to the Syriac version of the letter in 'Saint Grégoire de Nysse, *Ep. ad Philippum*', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 11 (1921), 220–222,

where he republished a French translation by M. Nau of the Syriac translation.

Alerted to the existence of this letter, the indefatigable researcher of manuscripts and library inventories, Giovanni Mercati, located in the Biblioteca Aragonese in Naples a Latin translation of the whole letter in *Ottoboniani* lat. 70, ff. 57–58, a mid 16th century manuscript which once belonging to the Dominican house of S. Marco in Florence. The *Ottoboniani* ms. contains a collection of Latin translations of Greek fathers: St Athanasius, the three Cappadocian Fathers, St John Chrysostom, St Cyril of Alexandria and Proclus of Constantinople, all meant as material for the controversy with Protestants in that period. Mercati subsequently identified the source, direct or mediated, of the *Ottoboniani* ms. in the description of a manuscript by the 17th cent. Jesuit, Zaccaria. He finally located this ms. on 7 May 1936 in Florence: *Laurenzio di San Marco* 584. This is a 9th cent. ms. which had came into the library of S. Marco in 1437 through Nicolò Niccoli and from there had passed to the Laurentian Library in 1808. The *Laurenzio* ms. is written in an elegant Carolingian hand, with Greek words appearing here and there in the text, well rendered and without accents. This ms. in its turn had been copied from a much older ms. which transcribed the forms of the Greek as it found them. According to Mercati (187) very few Latin translations of St Athanasius were transmitted in the Carolingian era. But, thanks to the *Catalogi bibliothecarum antiqui* by Becker, he identified a ms. of Bobbio which contained the *Librum Athanasii contra Apollinarem* (Book of Athanasius against Apollinaris) which is also found in the *Laurenzio* ms. Mercati's study of *Laurenzio di San Marco* 584 is found in 'Di alcuni manoscritti Ottoboniani non conosciuti', *Codici latini Pico Grimani e di altra biblioteca ignota del secolo XVI esistente greci di Pio di Modena*, Studi e Testi 75 (Città del Vaticano, 1938), 169–202 at 191–196. This translation is made from his edition of the letter on pp. 194–195.

Despite the unanimous testimony of Leontius, Damascene and Maron, the assignment of this letter to Gregory of Nyssa has been queried. Mercati (192–193) has no doubts that its Christology is of the late 4th century, but proposes Amphilochius of Iconium as the author instead, but only by a rather strained exercise of recasting Seleucus as the addressee and not the occasion of the letter.³⁹ J.-R. Pouchet⁴⁰ considers that it comes from the fifth century, and even from a Nestorian provenance, but this is surely anachronistic. Maraval is non committal about its authenticity. The above doubts do not offer enough warrant to set aside the unanimous attribution to Gregory by the three ancient witnesses.

³⁹ He bases himself (192, n. 3) on fragments of a letter by Amphilochius, e.g. *P.G.* 39, 112–113 addressed to a Seleucus. But the argument is very conjectural and seems far-fetched.

⁴⁰ In 'Le vocabulaire de l'union et du rapport des natures chez saint Grégoire de Nysse', *Revue Thomiste* 68 (1968), 533–582 at 577 note.

The Syriac translation, as far as can be judged from the French, appears to be rather free (indeed making a glaring error in offering 'substances' as a synonym of 'persons'), though it did help elucidate some points.

The Latin translation however, takes a very different approach. The translator is critically aware that he is dealing with terms fraught with dogmatic significance and that he must not misrepresent them. Hence he translates his Greek source very scrupulously, on only one obvious occasion resorting to *amplificatio* when he offers a Latin synonym of the term συναλιφήν—which he transcribes anyway. He transliterates one important Greek term *synusiaste* that has no easy Latin correlate, given the use of *consubstantialis* to translate ὁμοούσιος. He uses *subsistentia* as the exact Latin correlate of *hypostasis*, while reserving *persona* to translate its precise Greek equivalent, πρόσωπον. He renders ἐπεΐσακτον exactly as 'subintroductum'. He is even careful to replicate conjunctions, prepositions and 'colouring' particles, as is proved in a comparison of the surviving Greek fragment and his translation. He turned out a Latin translation in whose testamentary reliability anyone not literate in Greek could afford to place full confidence.

Where would one find a Latin translator with such a brief for exactitude in Greek and Latin and with such theological scrupulosity between the period of Jerome and Rufinus c. 400, and that of John Scotus Eriugena, c. 800? Both the linguistic expertise and the ecclesiastical career of Dionysius Exiguus (465–550) are suggestive.⁴¹ Dionysius was a highly educated bilingual monk from the western shores of the Black Sea, the Dobrudja region of modern Romania (as St John Cassian had been). He appears to have been a monk in a monastery of Latin speaking 'Scythian' monks in Constantinople, whose concern at the confusion in Church affairs put them into contact with Rome. Pope Gelasius 'head-hunted' Dionysius and invited him to Rome in 496 for his much needed services in the papal chancery. Rome and Constantinople were then in their first schism over imperial and patriarchal appeasement of the Monophysites, the so-called 'Acacian' schism. Dionysius' work as a mediator between the Greek speaking and Latin speaking churches, in which, *inter alia*, he remedied problems arising from previous bad translations, was instrumental in bringing the schism to an end. The milieu of Christological crisis in which he worked would explain his interest in the doctrinal contents of this letter. Dionysius' familiarity with Gregory of Nyssa is shown by his translation of Gregory's *On the Making of Man* (PL 67, 345–408), which is important to Christology since Gregory's account of the Incarnation is profoundly informed by his anthropological understanding.

Doctrinally the present letter is especially interesting in that it canvasses a nexus between Arian theology and Christology. The whole spectrum of Arianizing theology, from the Anomoians to the Homoiousians, concurred with Nicene and orthodox doctrine that Jesus Christ was the incarnation

⁴¹ On Dionysius, see Gallagher, *op. cit.*, 1–18.

of the pre-existent 'divine' *Logos*. The dispute was over what it meant to call the *Logos* 'divine', not so much with the dynamic of the Incarnation as such. Thus the Arian Christ was not God but a creature, not because he was an 'inspired man' like a prophet, but because the pre-existent *Logos* itself of which he was the incarnation was not really divine but created, however sublime in rank.

The addressee, Philip, has some kind of pastoral responsibility for 'the faithful' (32.1). Given his title as 'monk', he was either the superior or a senior of a monastic community ('you and those who are with you' 32.2). From the fact that the three ancient witnesses of the letter were all located in the Levant, one might infer that Philip and his community were in Syria, with which region Gregory of Nyssa had many contacts as his brother Basil had. Philip has written to tell Gregory of a certain Seleucus who has attempted to bait the community with what he thinks are new objections to the doctrine of the Homoousians (the Nicene orthodox). It seems safe to say that Seleucus is a follower of the rationalist theologian Eunomius. He is, in short, an Anomoian, or ultra-Arian, which party was still causing much trouble in the 380s. He appears to be of the educated class and of some social rank. Philip and his circle are either intimidated, or, if not, at least seek the assurance of an authoritative exposition from Gregory, as did many others throughout the 380s. As Gregory summarizes Philip's report (32.2–3), Seleucus had brashly misapplied considerations from *oikonomia* concerning the incarnate Christ, to *theologia* on the nature of the pre-existent *Logos* and the Trinity.

It is no difficult task for Gregory to sort out the ineptitudes of such argumentation, steering clear as he does so of the Christological pitfalls of both Apollinarism which shortchanged the integrity of Christ's humanity, and Eunomianism which was militantly opposed to the truly divine nature of the *Logos*. The result is as exact an account of Christ as one person existing in two integral natures as can be found before the Christological definitions of the 5th century—perhaps not even excepting Nazianzen's famous Christological letters 101, 102, 202, of which the author of this letter is surely well aware. Leontius, John Damascene and John Maron at any rate fastened on 32.8–9 as patristic support for their refutation of Monophysitism, hence the survival of the Greek fragments and the Syriac translation. The letter nevertheless reveals the Antiochene Word/Man Christology typical of Gregory which can be seen in this volume in **letter 3**. While this type of Christology was very clear on the integrity of Christ's two natures, its account of the unity, the 'single entity' (32.13) in Christ did not ultimately prove sufficient. It was uncertain whether the Greek term *πρόσωπον* had sufficient theological weight at that time to denote this unity—compare its use for example in **letter 35.8d**. This together with the inadequacy of 'blending' and 'becoming' terminology in 32.8 (as also in **letter 3.19**) invited the eventual clarification of the dogma of the hypostatic union in the following century.

To the monk Philip, on the objections of the Arians

1. Malice is something begotten in the soul,⁴² and those who incline themselves to it conceive a disdain for all that is good. Let me say this with reference to the noble⁴³ Seleucus. For I realized from what you have written the kind of evils he is causing the faithful in these strange times, and the kind of memory he has of us *on account of the hope which is in us* (1 Pet 3.15).

2. But to leave that aside, I will come to the subject of your enquiry. Your worthy letter recalled how that absurd man, languishing in the Arian sickness, brought an objection to you and those who are with you, that if the Son is subject to passion⁴⁴ and the Father is not subject to passion,⁴⁵ then consubstantiality⁴⁶ is dissolved and has no basis. **3.** Secondly, if the difference between persons in the Trinity separates what is greater from what is lesser, then manifestly the Father pre-exists the Son and is the maker, whereas the latter is a creature and something made, he the greater, the latter the lesser, he the one sending, the latter the one sent, and other things of this kind. You ask me pressingly for a sufficient answer to these objections.

4. Briefly then, with God as our co-worker, we take up the first objection. If the Son—which is an astonishing thing—is subject to passion in his nature,⁴⁷ and were said to be also subject to passion in his divine nature—which is impossible—the things said by that gentleman Seleucus might perhaps have some basis. **5.** But if he is subject to passion in his human nature and is *not* subject to passion in his divine nature—which is what the faithful confess—the scope of consubstantiality⁴⁸ is preserved, I consider, inviolate. **6.** For we do not say that he is of one nature in his divinity and flesh, as in the

⁴² The Greek of the title and the *incipit* is: πρὸς Φίλιππον μονάζοντα περὶ τῶν Ἀρειανῶν ἀντιθέσεων. Ἡ κακία γέννημά ἐστι ψυχῆς . . .

⁴³ propter bonum virum Seleucum. The French of the Syriac later in the occurrence of this phrase in 32.4 has 'du venerable Seleucus'. Either this reflects Seleucus' age and social standing, or perhaps there is an ironical edge to Gregory's use of it.

⁴⁴ passibilis, = ἐνπάθης.

⁴⁵ impassibilis, = ἀπαθής.

⁴⁶ consubstantialitas, = ὁμοουσιότης. I.e. of the pre-existent Logos with God.

⁴⁷ The force of the antithesis would seem to require 'divine' nature here, but it is not in the text.

⁴⁸ I.e. the consubstantiality of the divine *Logos* with God the Father.

absurdities of those who say he is of 'blended substance',⁴⁹ but that he has a twofold existence⁵⁰ and is susceptible to passion in the one and not subject to it in the other.

7. Let us solve also the second objection. We acknowledge a difference of *hypostases* or of persons,⁵¹ so we do not introduce a coalescing⁵² of persons as did Sabellius. And we confess that the holy Trinity has but one substance⁵³ admitting neither addition nor diminution. **8.** Since in truth the Father does not precede the Son, but is co-equal with him in all things except causality, how can we in view of this speculate whether there was a time when the Father was unoccupied with being Father, and the Son unoccupied with being Son?⁵⁴ **9.** If, on the contrary, the Father *is* always and the Son *is* always, it is clear that the being and substance⁵⁵ of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit is one, although indeed the Son assumed for us a created nature. **10.** For he alone, being made man,⁵⁶ par-

⁴⁹ Synusiaste; the Greek term is transliterated. συνουσιαστής was used by Diodorus of Tarsus, Leontius of Byzantium, Cyril of Alexandria, Eustathius the monk and Leontius of Jerusalem for those who asserted Christ's flesh to be of the same substance as his divinity. In Gregory's time *synousia* was a badge of Apollinarian doctrine. See the account of Apollinarian Christology by Gregory Nazianzen, Letter 202.10–15, especially 202.12: 'As though even before he came down he was the Son of Man, and when he came down he brought with Him that flesh which apparently he had in Heaven, as though it had existed before the ages and been joined with his substance.'

⁵⁰ sed duplex existens.

⁵¹ subsistentiarum sive personarum; one might be tempted to think the Latin translator is glossing *hypostases*, but a doublet also exists in the French translation of the Syriac version, and *person* appears in the Greek text in 32.13. Gregory also uses the term 'person' in Trinitarian theology in letter 34.4g, 8c, d.

⁵² συναλψήν id est . . . commixtionem; the Latin translator transcribes the Greek term and then glosses it with a synonym.

⁵³ essentiam, i.e. οὐσία, here translated to keep the terminology consistent as it would have been in Gregory's Greek.

⁵⁴ I have cast the sentence as a question to make sense of the Latin text as it stands. Otherwise, a negative, which seems to be present in John Maron's translation, may have dropped out (Bardy 1921, 221C). The sense then would be: 'Since the Father in truth . . ., hence we should *not* speculate . . .'

⁵⁵ existentia et essentia; *existentia* must translate something like ὑπαρξις, which usually has a connotation of existence in a subject (cf. ὑπάρχων in **32.13**). Otherwise one might think that the Latin translator is glossing οὐσία (essentia); however a doublet also appears in the Syriac translation.

⁵⁶ inhumanatus. Lewis and Short, *Latin Dictionary*, attest Cassiodorus (5th/6th cent.) for this term; Cassiodorus was a friend of Dionysius Exiguus, the proposed translator of this letter. The word also appears in the *Codex Iustinianus* 1.1.6.1. The Greek original is ἐνανθρωπήσας.

took of both created and uncreated nature, mortal and immortal, circumscribed and uncircumscribed, and he did not, because in these last times he was made man, cease to be God or quit his consubstantiality with the Father. The voice of the Lord provides firm assurance of this where he says *I and the Father are one* (Jn 10.30), *I in the Father and the Father in me* (cf. Jn 10.38 14.10 17.21) and other similar passages.

11. But since they bring up against the Son his creatureliness, his diminishment,⁵⁷ his being sent and other such things, they should know very well that these things are predicated of him in the flesh, and that he was not thereby banished at some time from the Father's substance as some think, but that the one Son existent in his own flesh,⁵⁸ is both consubstantial with the Father, and the same himself not consubstantial with what is not in accord with itself.⁵⁹

12. For who among the wise does not know that the⁶⁰ things which are consubstantial possess identity, but that is otherwise with things of different substance.⁶¹ For even if the two together are one in an ineffable and indescribable unity,⁶² yet they are not so in nature, I say, with regard to what is unconfusable:⁶³ for what is divine is other, apart from the body, for it is brought in from without.⁶⁴ **13.** Christ then, existing⁶⁵ in two natures and truly made known in them,

⁵⁷ As in his *kenosis*, his self-emptying, in the imagery of Phil 2.7.

⁵⁸ sed unus existens Filius cum propria carne.

⁵⁹ et non consubstantialis idem ipse non secundum id ipsum; a difficult passage, evidently meaning that Christ's created human nature is not consubstantial with the divine nature, which Apollinarians had apparently advanced with their notions of Christ as the *heavenly man* based on 1 Cor 15.45–49), so that even his humanity had pre-existence.

⁶⁰ The Greek fragment anthologised by Leontius and Damascene commences at this point.

⁶¹ τὰ μὲν ὁμοούσια ταυτότητα κέκτηται, τὰ δὲ ἑτεροούσια τὸ ἀνάπαλιν. ταυτότητα here cannot mean *subjective* identity but *objective* identity: the qualities of the divine nature in each of the Trinity are identical.

⁶² Κἂν γὰρ ἀρρήτῳ καὶ ἀφράστῳ ἐνώσει τὰ συναμφότερα ἓν, . . .

⁶³ (Continuing from Greek above) ἀλλ' οὐ τῇ φύσει διὰ τὸ ἀσύγκυτον.

⁶⁴ (Continuing from Greek above) ἕτερον γὰρ τὸ θεῖον παρα τὸ σῶμα, ἐπεὶ σῶμα-τον γάρ, the Latin: 'aliud est enim id quod divinum est praeter corpus, subintroducedum est enim'. This is not perhaps the happiest formulation in the light of later definitions. It does however accord with Gregory's Christology as expressed in letter 3.19, where he attempts to account for the moment of Christ's conception in the womb of Mary.

⁶⁵ Χριστὸς δύο ὑπάρχων φύσεις.

has the person of his sonship as a single entity,⁶⁶ yet bears in himself the unconfusable⁶⁷ and indivisible distinction between the Word and the ensouled flesh, through which the principle of the properties is preserved integrally.⁶⁸

14. We have briefly written these things in order to refute the foolishness of the noble Seleucus, and to confirm you and those who love the truth. For I want you to preserve your conscience free of error (cf. 1 Tim 3.9) and to shun the snares of the more widespread and malign heresies. Offer up supplications for us always to him who dispels evils and is our saviour, Christ, to whom be the glory unto ages of ages.⁶⁹ Amen.

LETTER 33 TO EUSTATHIUS THE PHYSICIAN⁷⁰

A shorter version of present letter appears as letter 189 in the Benedictine edition (ed. P. Maran) of the letters of St Basil. The longer version is transmitted among the works of Gregory of Nyssa. Some passages appear only in the longer version, and there are several variants distinguishing the texts of the two transmissions.

Giovanni Mercati was the first in modern times to argue Gregory's authorship of this letter, in 'La lettere ad Eustazio *de Sancta Trinitate* ossia la 189 tra le lettere di S. Basilio', *Varia Sacra*, fascicolo I, Studi e Testi 11 (Roma: Tipografia Vaticana, 1903), 57–70 (study), 71–82 (first edition of the complete form of the letter under Gregory's name).⁷¹ In this study Mercati

⁶⁶ μοναδικὸν ἔχει τῆς υἱότητος τὸ πρόσωπον. Given the ambivalences of πρόσωπον (person, face, mask) in Greek, it will be seen that this formulation, excellent for its time, needed to be sharpened with use of *hypostasis* and *divine* hypostasis.

⁶⁷ The Greek text ceases at this point, rounding off the citation in this form: 'a unique person as Son, yet unconfused.' One can only conjecture that the immediate mention of the 'undivisible' did not serve the anti-Monophysite purpose of the anthologists.

⁶⁸ inconfusibilem tamen et indivisibilem portat in semetipso Verbi et animatae carnis differentiam per quam intiger proprietatum conservator sermo.

⁶⁹ That Gregory addresses prayer to Christ is noteworthy. Origen had taught that prayer to Christ was insufficient, for Christian prayer was properly addressed to the Father. For a profound justification of prayer to Christ from a Trinitarian perspective, see letter 33.41.

⁷⁰ Ed.: (F. Müller) GNO 3.1, 3–16, tr. NPNF ser. 2, vol 5, 326–330. Also transmitted as Basil Letter 189, mss.: VPBM, LC, ed. & tr.: Courtonne 2.132–141, Def. 3.48–69; tr.: NPNF ser. 2, vol. 8, 228–232. On the textual transmission see GNO 3.1, xi–xxiv, '**EustArc 2/189', BBV 1.613–615.

⁷¹ It may be pointed out that there is some bibliographical confusion with regard to this article. It seems to stem from a mix of Arabic and Roman numeration in the title page, which has 'Studi e Testi 11 (two or eleven?)', and '*Varia Sacra*, fas-

analysed the ancient testimonies which unanimously attest Gregory's authorship, beginning with Lateran Council I⁷² and Constantinople III,⁷³ neither of which councils had been considered by Maran. There was also the Syriac version in the codex British Museum Add. 14, 618, 7/8th cent.⁷⁴ and the author, possibly Anastasius of Sinai, of *Antiquorum Patrum Doctrina de Verbi Incarnatione* on the incarnation of the Word.⁷⁵

Mercati built his case on evaluations of previously unpublished sections of the letter (above all **33.9**). In considering the two different versions, one 'Basilian', the other 'Nyssen', of a concluding passage of **8c** ('but the commonality consisting of nature is manifestly proved through the identity of operations') he proved that the Greek text used by the Lateran council of 649 was definitely of the 'Nyssen' type. And one may also note the exactitude of the Latin translation in the acts of that council.

This is also the case in the acts of the sixth ecumenical council, which declared that the Greek text of **6a** (let them show then . . .)–**6d** received from Rome agreed with the Patriarch of Constantinople's codex. Mercati proved from the type of variants used that the Greek text in both Rome and Constantinople was again of the 'Nyssen' recension. Similarly with the same from of **8b** also shared between Rome and Constantinople. No such lineage can be demonstrated for the Basilian recension.

In addition, St Maximus the Confessor, who was a contemporary of the Lateran council, in his *diversae definitiones sanctorum divinorum Patrum de duabus operationibus . . . Iesu Christi*⁷⁶ cites four passages from this letter to Eustathius the physician, under St Gregory of Nyssa's name and according to the Nyssen recension. These passages are **7h**, **8b** (yet through . . . the operator), **8c** (but the . . . of operations) and **6d**.

Turning to internal evidence, a new passage that appears only in the Nyssen recension, **7e–g**, can be shown to belong intrinsically to the sequence of the argument. Without it there is a sudden leap, a jolt, from the suggestion that 'clear evidence from his own life' is about to be considered, to the doctrinal conclusion in **7h**.

Similarly with the last long section **33.9** which appears only in the Nyssen recension. **8c** speaks of those names surrounding substance 'which take their names from some operation or dignity', and in **8b** examples of names indicating operation, such as benefactor and judge have been discussed. It is only in the new passage **9a**, that the argument can be seen to continue without a break, when it begins to deal with names which denote dignity.

cicolo I'. It needs almost a magnifying glass to establish that on balance, 1 and not 11 is used and eleven is meant. In Müller's edition (and elsewhere) Mercati's article is dated 1924, whereas the actual book I have before my eyes declares 1903.

⁷² AD 649, Mansi X 1073–6.

⁷³ The sixth ecumenical council, 680–681, Mansi XI 425–428.

⁷⁴ W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Mss* II, 682.

⁷⁵ D. Serruys, 'Anastasiana', *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire* 22 (1902), 157ff., 170 ff.

⁷⁶ P.G. 91, 284.

Contra Maran, not only can no opposition to Gregory's authorship be maintained on stylistic grounds, Mercati points out some striking correspondences of **33.9** with phraseology in Gregory's other works. The extended treatment of the name *Christ* ('anointed') and the Holy Spirit as *anointing* can be found nowhere else in Basil's writing, but is paralleled with almost identical expressions in Gregory's *On the Christian Profession*,⁷⁷ *On Perfection*⁷⁸ and especially in *Against the Macedonians* 16.⁷⁹

The affinity with Gregory's other writings can also be demonstrated with the known parts of the letter. To give just one example: much of what is said in **5e** about the sorceress who called up Samuel's spirit and about Balaam can be closely paralleled with passages in Gregory's small treatise *de Pythonissa*, or *on the Sorceress*.⁸⁰

Gregory's classic epistolary pattern is clearly observable in this letter. As in letter 1, both his typical opening ambits are found, a pithy *sententia*, and a graphic image (**2a**), followed by a transitional sentence and the detailed application to the case in hand (**2b**). Stylistic features and themes found in Gregory's other works also occur in **2b**, **5e**.

In conclusion there can be little doubt that the longer version of the letter transmitted among Gregory's works and under his name is the full and original form of the letter.

In 1958 Friedrich Müller published a new edition of the letter.⁸¹ The following are the codices collated:

- A** Venetus Marcianus gr. 68, parchment, 12th cent.
- L** Leidensis Gronovianus 12, paper 16th cent.
- S** Vaticanus gr. 1907, paper, 12th cent.
- E** Vaticanus gr. 446, parchment, 12th cent.
- J** Vindobonensis theol gr. 35, paper, 13th cent.
- O** Monacensis gr. 370, parchment, 10th cent.
- M** Ambrosianus C 135 inf., parchment, 11th cent.
- K** Venetus Marcianus gr. 67, parchment, 11th cent.
- syr** (the Syriac version) Musei Britannici 768 Add. 14 618, 7th/8th cent.
- b** marginal readings in L, taken from a 'copy of Basil', i.e. from the *Frobeniana Basilii Magni*, printed in 1532.
- v** the Benedictine edition of 'Basil Letter 189,' i.e. the 'Basilian' recension.
- m** Mercati's edition of 1924 (1903 in reality).

The codices grouped into three textual families: ALS, EJ, OMK. Pasquali did not include this letter in his edition, and so it did not appear in the

⁷⁷ *P.G.* 46 241C, GNO 8.1.134.3–6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 253D, GNO 8.1.253.

⁷⁹ *P.G.* 45, 1320–1, GNO 3.1.102.17–103.5.

⁸⁰ GNO 3.2.101–108 at 102 and 104–106.

⁸¹ GNO 3.1, *Opera Dogmatica Minora*, xi–xxiv (*praefatio*) 1–16 (text).

GNO republication of his edition. Müller published it instead in a volume of minor dogmatic works (GNO 3.1 xi–xxiv, 1–17). But since it has been published for so long among St Basil's letters, it is not unreasonable, now that its true authorship is acknowledged, to include it in the present collection of St Gregory's letters.

Basil's Letter 151 is addressed to the same Eustathius, a physician and an orthodox Christian. The relationship evidently continued after his death with Gregory, whom Eustathius regards as a public defender of orthodox doctrine. The physician has written to Gregory to urge him speak up against those who libel him with advocating three gods.

Is it tempting to date this letter early in the period after Gregory's restoration, 378–379, when Eustathius of Sebasteia may have still been alive. For although the inscriptions in the Gregorian transmission all describe the letter as 'on the Trinity', its focus is really on the Holy Spirit as one of the Trinity. Gregory is attempting to deal with the prejudices and correct the misunderstandings of the Pneumatomachoi ('Spirit-fighters'), whose leader was, or had been Eustathius, once the great friend of Emmelia's family. His partisans, however, continued to foment trouble in the see of Sebasteia after their leader's death, as can be seen in letters **18**, **19**, **22**, and it is doubtful that Peter became bishop there until the Council of Constantinople of 381 began to take affect in the churches of the east. So the letter is better dated to a period after 381.

Ever since the council of Alexandria in 362 the Neo-nicenes had made the clarification of the terms used for the Holy Trinity part of their mission. This forms the doctrinal backdrop of the letter. See the prefatory note to **letter 35**. The letter is especially important for its exposition of the terms οὐσία (here, 'substance') and ἐνέργεια (here, 'operation') in relation to God in **33.6e–g**, **7f–h**, **8d**. On *energeia* see also **letter 24.14**, **letter 35**. Here Gregory argues in characteristic fashion that the identical operations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit that are demonstrated in Scripture establish that the whole Trinity is involved in all saving acts. Cf. **letter 5.5c**, where the same doctrine is rehearsed, also in the context of Pneumatomachian accusations, with the use of the term *hypostasis*.

The eight sections of the Basilian editions are re-employed here, with subversification added using letters of the alphabet. The ninth and last section, found only in the Nyssen recension, is an exercise in scriptural exegesis, explaining that if the Holy Spirit bestows the anointing of the Christ (the Anointed), he must of necessity partake of the royal dignity that he confers. The translation is from Müller's edition in GNO 3.1, and his pagination is indicated in square brackets.

*To Eustathius the physician on the Holy Trinity and against the
Pneumatomachoi, that the Spirit is God*⁸²

1a. All you who practice medicine surely have philanthropy for your profession.⁸³ And it seems to me that one who preferred your science to all pursuits of this life would hit upon the proper judgment and not miss the mark—that is if that which is valued above all else, life, is repugnant and full of pain if one cannot have it with health, and it is health which your art procures. **1b.** But with you the science is especially dextrous and you enlarge for yourself the scope of its philanthropy, since you do not limit the bestowal of your art to bodies, but also give thought to remedying the infirmities of the mind.⁸⁴

1c. I say this not only because I echo what many report, but also because of what I myself have learned from experience on several other occasions and especially now in this unaccountable⁸⁵ malice of our enemies. For it had swept over our life like a destructive flood, when skilfully you dispersed it, allaying the intense inflammation of our heart [GNO 3.1, 4] by the irrigation of your soothing words.

1d. For when I considered the repeated and varied attempts of our enemies against us, I deemed it right to remain silent and bear their attacks quietly rather than contradict those armed with the lie, that vicious weapon, which sometimes drives home its point even with the truth. You did well however in urging me not to surrender the truth, but to refute the slanderers, lest harm come to many through a triumph of the lie over the truth.

2a. Those therefore who took up this causeless hatred against us seemed to be behaving somewhat as in Aesop's fable. For just as he

⁸² 'From Gregory bishop of Nyssa to Eustathius on the Holy Trinity' AL, 'From the same to Eustathius (on the Holy Trinity K, om. O) and against the *pneumatomachoi*, that the Spirit is God' OK, 'To Eustathius the physician concerning enquiries about 'the three [gods] advocated by us', and against the *pneumatomachoi*', S.

The title in all Basilian mss. is 'To Eustathius the chief physician', with one ms. adding a thematic description. Müller follows AL. To distinguish the Eustathius, I have added in 'the physician', supported by S in the Nyssen transmission, and add the thematic description in OK.

⁸³ On Gregory's esteem of the medical profession see letter 13.1 and note.

⁸⁴ ψυχικῶν ἀρρωστημάτων, not 'spiritual' illnesses, but maladies of the *psyche*, emotional disturbances.

⁸⁵ Especially hard to understand because the protagonist of the Pneumatomachoi was Eustathius of Sebasteia, in years past a close friend to Gregory of Nyssa's family.

has the wolf bring certain charges against the lamb—being ashamed evidently of appearing to destroy without just cause one who had done him no harm, yet when the lamb easily refutes all the slanderous charges brought against him, has the wolf in no way slacken his attack. Instead, when defeated by justice, he conquers with his teeth. **2b.** So it is with those who have pursued their hatred against us as if it were one of the good works.⁸⁶ Blushing perhaps at appearing to hate without a cause, they invent charges and complaints against us, while they do not abide by in any of their assertions. As the reason for their enmity against us they allege now one thing, and after a little while another, and then again something else. Their malice has no firm ground. When they are thrown off one charge [GNO 3.1, 5.] they cling to another, and from that again they seize on a third, and if all their charges are refuted, still they do not desist from their hatred.

2c. They accuse us of advocating⁸⁷ three gods and din this slander into the ears of the many, never ceasing to deck it out persuasively. But then the truth fights for us, for we make it plain both publicly to all and privately to those we meet, that we anathematise anyone who says that there are three gods. Indeed we do not even regard such a one a Christian. **2d.** But when they hear this, they have Sabellius to hand to use against us, noisily detecting in our argument the plague that came from him. So again, we confront this too with our habitual armour, the truth, and make it plain that we shudder at this heresy as equivalent to Judaism.

3a. What then? After all these attempts did they grow weary and hold their peace? No indeed! Now they accuse of innovation, supporting the charge against us as follows. They claim that though we confess three *hypostases*, we assert that there is one goodness and one power and one deity. And in saying this they do not depart from the truth, for we do so assert. But in making this charge, they argue that their custom does not condone it and Scripture does not support it.

⁸⁶ The same sentiment occurs in letter 1.1.

⁸⁷ *προσβεβέσθαι*, not 'honouring', since this verb was not used by the Cappadocian fathers for worship, but 'acting as ambassador for'. Gregory treated this issue at greater length in later life, writing in response to a query by a friend, in *To Ablabius*, that there are not three gods, GNO 3.1, 37–57, tr. NPNF 2nd ser. 5.331–336.

3b. What then is our reply to this? We do not consider it right to make the custom that prevails among them the law and rule of sound doctrine. For if custom is valid as a proof of soundness,⁸⁸ surely we too may put forward [GNO 3.1, 6] in our defence the custom that prevails among us, and if they reject this, we surely do not have to follow theirs. Let the God-inspired Scripture therefore decide between us, and the verdict of the truth will surely go to those whose teachings are found to be in harmony with the divine words.

3c. What then is their charge? They bring forward two charges against simultaneously: first, that we divide the *hypostases*, and second, that we do not number in the plural any of the God-befitting names, but, as said above, proclaim the goodness as one and the power and the deity and all such attributes in the singular. With regard to the division of the *hypostases*, they cannot well object who themselves decree⁸⁹ the difference of substances⁹⁰ in the divine nature. For it is improbable that they who say there are three substances do not also assert emphatically that there are three *hypostases*. **3e.** This therefore is the only charge: that we proclaim in the singular the names applied to the divine nature.

4a. But we have a prompt and clear argument in reply to this.⁹¹ For anyone who condemns those who say that the deity is one, must either support those who say that there are more than one or those who say that there is none. For it is not possible to conceive of a third alternative.⁹² But the teachings of Scripture do not allow us to say that there are more than one, because whenever it mentions deity it uses it in the singular: [GNO 3.1, 7] *in Him dwells all the fullness of the deity* (Col 2.9); and, elsewhere, *his invisible qualities, namely his eternal power and deity, have been perceived from the foundation of the world, being inferred from the things that are made* (Rom 1.20). **4b.** If extending the number of deities to multiplicity is proper only to those in the

⁸⁸ ὀρθότητος, or 'orthodoxy'.

⁸⁹ δογματίζοντες, i.e., those who theologise in this way and teach accordingly.

⁹⁰ τὴν ἑτερότητα ('otherness') τῶν οὐσιῶν. Gregory here refers to all theologising of an arianizing stamp, from the *anomoians* who baldly asserted the unlikeness of Father and Son, up to an including the *homoiousians*, of which the *pneumatomachoi* were a late variant, who, though stressing *likeness of substance*, stopped short of confessing the *same* divine substance in each of the Persons.

⁹¹ A negation of the statement occurs in OMK, but is corrected in OM.

⁹² This sentence is missing in b, v.

sickness of polytheistic error, whereas to deny the deity altogether would be the part of atheists, what is the doctrine that slanders us for confessing that the deity is one?

4c. But they reveal more clearly the object of their argument when they accept that the Father is God and agree that the Son is likewise to be honoured with the name of deity, but beyond that, do not agree that the Spirit who is numbered together with the Father and the Son⁹³ is to be included in the conception of deity, but that the power of the deity, issuing from the Father as far as the Son, excludes the nature of the Spirit from the divine glory. Consequently we must briefly make a defence, as best we can, against this conception also.

5a. What then is our doctrine? The Lord, in delivering the saving faith to the disciples in the word, joins the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son (cf. Mt 28.19). We affirm that what has once been conjoined maintains that conjunction in all respects, for it is not joined in one aspect and sundered in others. But in that life-giving power by which our nature is transferred from the perishable life to immortality the power of the Spirit is included with the Father and the Son (cf. Jn 5.21 6.63), and in many other instances, as in the concepts of the good, the holy and eternal, the wise, the upright, the governing, the mighty. Indeed in every case he shares inseparability with them in all the [GNO 3.1, 8] names reserved for the higher powers. Therefore we consider it right to hold that what is joined to the Father and the Son in such sublime and God-befitting conceptions is set apart from them in none.

5b. For we do not know of any distinction of superiority and inferiority in the names conceived of for the divine nature, that it might be thought pious to allow to the Spirit communion in the inferior attributes while judging him unworthy of the more elevated. For all the God-befitting names and concepts have the same honour with each other, for they are in no way distinguishable with regard to the subject that they signify. The title 'the good' does not lead the mind to one subject, and 'the wise' or 'the mighty' or 'the righteous' to another. No, whatever names you use, the thing signified by them all is one, and if you speak of God, you denote the same whom you understood by the other names.

⁹³ I.e. in the dominical formula of Baptism, Mt 28.19.

5c. If indeed all the names ascribed to the divine nature are equally valid with each other for denoting the subject, because they lead our mind to the same subject under this aspect or that, what is the reason for allowing to the Spirit communion with the Father and the Son in the other names, but excluding him from the god-head alone? It is entirely necessary either to allow him communion in this also or not to concede it [GNO 3.1, 9] in the others. For if he is worthy in the other attributes, surely he is not less worthy in this. **5d.** But if, according to their argument he is of a lesser degree, and so is excluded from communion with the Father and the Son in the name of deity, he is also unworthy to share any other of the God-befitting names. For when the names are contemplated and compared according to the aspect contemplated in each, none will be found to imply less than the title of 'God'. **5e.** Evidence of this is that many inferior things also are called by this very name. Moreover, the divine Scripture does not shrink from using this name ambiguously even of realities that contradict it, as when it names idols by the title of 'god'. For *Let the gods, it says, that have not made the heavens and the earth perish, and be cast down beneath the earth* (Jer 10.11 Sept), and, *the gods of the heathens are demons* (Ps 95.5), and when the sorceress in her necromancies conjures up for Saul the spirits he asked for, she says that she *saw gods* (1 Sam 28.13).⁹⁴ And again Balaam who was an augur and a seer and had in hand the divinations (as Scripture says) and acquired for himself the instruction of demons through his augur's magic, [GNO 3.1, 10] is said in Scripture to receive counsel from God (cf. Num 22.20, 23.5).

5f. Many such examples can be selected from the divine Scriptures to prove that this name has no primacy over the other God-befitting titles, since, as has been said, we find it used equivocally⁹⁵ even of things that oppose it, whereas we are taught in Scripture that the names of 'the holy' and 'the incorruptible' and 'the righteous' and 'the good', are nowhere bestowed indiscriminately where they are not due. **5g.** If therefore they do not deny that the Holy Spirit has

⁹⁴ Gregory probes this episode at greater length, citing also Ps 95.5 and the Balaam story, in *On the Sorceress*, ed.: GNO 3.2, 101–108, tr.: C. McCambley, 'Gregory of Nyssa: Letter concerning the Sorceress, to Bishop Theodosios', *GOTR* 35 (1990), 129–137 at 134–137.

⁹⁵ ὁμώνυμῶς.

communion with the Father and the Son in those names which especially are predicated piously only of the divine nature, for what reason do they make him out to be excluded from communion in this one alone, in which it was shown that, through an equivocally usage, even demons and idols share?

6a. But they say that this title is indicative of nature, and that since the Spirit has no communion with the Father and the Son in nature, neither does he partake of the communion implied by this name. Let them show then by what means they discover this variation of nature. **6b.** For if it were possible to contemplate the divine nature in itself and to discover manifestly what is proper to it and what is alien, we should surely have no need of arguments or other evidences in order to comprehend the object of our enquiry.

6c. But because this is too sublime for the grasp of enquirers and we must infer carefully⁹⁶ from certain evidences [GNO 3.1, 11] about those matters which elude our knowledge, it is wholly necessary that we are guided in our investigation of the divine nature by its operations.⁹⁷

6d. Therefore if we see that the operations accomplished by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit differ one from each other, we shall deduce from the differentiation of operations that the operative natures also are different. For it cannot be that things which deviate in their very nature are assimilated to each other in the form of their operation—fire does not chill, or ice warm—but due to the difference of their natures the operations deriving from them are also distinct one from the other.

6e. But if we perceive that the operation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is one, differing or varying in no respect whatever, we must deduce the oneness of their nature from the identity of their operation. **7a.** The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit alike sanctify, and give life,⁹⁸ and console, and all such operations. And let no-one who has heard the Saviour in the Gospel saying to the Father concerning his disciples, *Father, sanctify them in your name*

⁹⁶ στοχάστικῶς (attentively, intently, tentatively, sensitively) ἀναλογίζομεθα (reason from).

⁹⁷ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν, lit. 'energies', activities, workings. Gregory is enunciating a classic principle of Cappadocian theological method.

⁹⁸ And give light, added in v.

(Jn 17.11, 17), [GNO 3.1, 12] assign the power of sanctifying in a special sense to the operation of the Spirit. So too all the other operations are accomplished in the worthy by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit equally: every grace and power, guidance, life, consolation, the change to immortality, the passage to freedom, and whatever other blessings there are that come down to us.

7b. But the dispensation of things above us concerning creatures both intellectual and perceptive⁹⁹—if we may at all speculate from the things we know to the things that lie above us—is not established without the operation and power of the Holy Spirit, each partaking of his help according to its own dignity and need. **7c.** For even if the ordering and governance of what is above our nature is obscure to our sense, nevertheless one may more reasonably conclude from what we know that the power of the Spirit is also operative in those beings, than that it is banished from the dispensation of what lies above us. For anyone who asserts the latter proposes a bare and groundless blasphemy, being unable to support the absurdity with any reasoning. **7d.** But anyone who concludes that the things above us are also ordered by the power of the Spirit together with the Father and the Son strengthens his case with the support of clear evidence from his own life. **7e.**¹⁰⁰ For inasmuch as human nature is compounded of body and soul and the angelic nature has for its portion the bodiless life, then if the Holy Spirit were operative only [GNO 3.1, 13] in the case of bodies and the soul were insusceptible of the grace that comes from him, one might perhaps deduce from this that if the intellectual and bodiless nature which is in us is above the power of the Spirit, so too the angelic life has no need of his grace.

7f. But if the gift of the Holy Spirit is primarily a grace of the soul, and if the constitution of the soul is in some way associated by its intellectuality and invisibility with the angelic and bodiless life, what person who knows how to see the consequence would not agree that every intellectual nature is governed by the ordering of the Holy Spirit? **7g.** For since it is said *their angels always behold the face of my*

⁹⁹ ἐν τῇ νοητῇ κρίσει καὶ ἐν τῇ αἰσθητῇ the higher echelon of created beings: the pure spirits of the angelic order. It is unusual to use αἰσθητῇ in this connection, which would usually mean 'sensate', 'sentient', 'with the senses' etc.

¹⁰⁰ 33.30–31 is missing in b, v, and the Basilian recension except for slightly different beginning and ending points in each.

Father who is in heaven (Mt 18.10) and it is not possible to behold the *hypostasis* of the Father otherwise than by fixing the gaze upon it through his impress, and *the impress of the hypostasis* (Heb 1.3)¹⁰¹ of the Father is the Only-begotten (Jn 1.14,18), and again to him¹⁰² no-one can draw near whose mind has not been illumined by the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3.18, 4.6), what else is shown by this but that the Holy Spirit is not separate from the one operation worked by the Father?¹⁰³

7h. Thus the identity of operation in Father and Son and Holy Spirit proves clearly the indistinguishability¹⁰⁴ of their substance. Consequently, even if the name of deity does signify nature, the commonality of substance¹⁰⁵ indicates that this title also will be properly applied to the Holy Spirit.

8a. Yet I do not know how they with all their ingenuity maintain [GNO 3.1, 14] that the title of deity is indicative of nature, as if they had not heard from the Scripture that nature does not result from appointment.¹⁰⁶ For Moses was appointed as a god to the Egyptians when he who gave him the oracles said to him *I have given you as a god to Pharaoh* (Ex 7.1). The title therefore is indicative of a certain power, whether of supervision or of operation. **8b.** But the divine nature remains as it is under all the names conceived for it, inexpressible,¹⁰⁷ this is our doctrine. For in learning that he is benefactor and judge, and both good and just, and other such titles, we are taught the diversity of his operations—yet through our comprehension of the operations we are not in any way better able to come to a knowledge of the nature of the operator. For anyone who gives a definition of each of these names and of the nature itself to which the names refer does not give the same definition of both, and where the definition of things differs, the nature of those things also is

¹⁰¹ ὁ δε χαρακτήρ (lit. character, stamp, impress) τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπόστασεως. Gregory discusses Heb 1.3 at length in 34.6–8.

¹⁰² τοῦτω, i.e. to the Father; at 33.28 Gregory uses ἐκείνω to refer to the latter of two preceding terms. As access to the Father is through the Son, so also is it through the Spirit.

¹⁰³ The third class of mss. and the Syriac version add ‘and of the son’.

¹⁰⁴ τὸ . . . ἀπαράλλακτον, invariability; Courtonne: l’absolue ressemblance.

¹⁰⁵ ἡ τῆς οὐσίας κοινότης τῆς οὐσίας, this is Gregory’s nearest approach to predicating the ὁμοούσιος of the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰⁶ Gregory later revisited and developed his arguments on this question in *On Common Notions*, and *To Ablabius, that there are not three gods*, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ ἀσήμεντος, a synonym for ‘incomprehensible’.

distinct. **8c.** Therefore the substance is one thing for which no intelligible definition has yet been discovered, but another is the significance of those names surrounding it which take their names from some operation or dignity. We do not discover in the communion of the names any difference in the operations, but the commonality consisting of nature is manifestly proved through the identity of operations.¹⁰⁸ [GNO 3.1, 15]

8d. If deity is a name of operation, because the operation of Father and Son and Holy Spirit is one, so we affirm the deity is one. And even if, according to the opinion of the many, the name of deity is indicative of nature, then because we cannot discover any variation in their nature because of the identity of operations,¹⁰⁹ we not unreasonably define the Holy Trinity to be of one deity.

9a. ¹¹⁰Yet if someone wishes to define this title as indicative of dignity, I do not know by what reasoning he holds the name to this significance. But alas, one hears many saying this kind of thing. Therefore, that the zeal of opponents may find no ground for attacking the truth, we will accommodate such a supposition and say to those who are of this opinion that even if the name does signify dignity, in this case too the title will be properly applied to the Holy Spirit.

9b. For consider: the name of kingship denotes all dignity, and *our God*, it says, *is King from everlasting* (Ps 73.12). But the Son, who possesses *all that the Father has* (Jn 16.15), is himself proclaimed king by Holy Scripture (cf. Jn 18.36). Now the divine Scripture says that the Holy Spirit is the anointing¹¹¹ of the Only-Begotten (cf. Acts 10.38, Lk 4.18), intimating the dignity of the Spirit by a metaphor from the terms commonly used here below. **9c.** For in ancient times, the symbol of this dignity for those who were being advanced to kingship was the anointing bestowed on them. Once this took place there was a change thereafter from a private humble estate to the pre-eminence of rule, and [GNO 3.1, 16] he who was deemed wor-

¹⁰⁸ v has a different text: 'but of the difference in respect of nature we find no clear proof, the identity of operations indicating instead, as we have said, commonality of nature'.

¹⁰⁹ 'due . . . operations' missing in v, and the Basilian recension.

¹¹⁰ All that follows, which is an argument for the equal dignity of the Spirit with the Son, is missing in the Basilian transmission.

¹¹¹ χρίσμα, lit. chrism.

thy of this grace received after his anointing another name, being called, instead of an ordinary man, the Lord's Anointed (cf. 1 Sam 16.6, Ps 2.2 etc.). **9d.** For this reason, in order that the dignity of the Holy Spirit might be more clearly manifest to human beings, he was named by the Scripture as the symbol of kingship, that is *anointing*, from which we are taught that the Holy Spirit shares in the glory and the kingship of the Only-begotten Son of God. **9e.** For just as in Israel¹¹² it was not permitted to enter upon the kingship without the bestowal of anointing beforehand, so the Word, by a metaphor of the names in use among us indicates the equality of power, showing that not even the kingship of the Son is assumed without the dignity of the Holy Spirit. Wherefore he is properly called Christ,¹¹³ since this name furnishes proof of his inseparable and unshakable conjunction with the Holy Spirit.

9f. If therefore *the Only-begotten God* (Jn 1.18) is the Christ, and the Holy Spirit is his anointing, and the title of Anointed indicates his kingly authority, and the anointing is the symbol of his kingship, then the Holy Spirit also shares in his dignity. If they say, therefore, that the name of deity refers to dignity, and the Holy Spirit is shown to share in this quality, it follows that he who shares in the dignity will certainly also share in the name which represents it.

LETTER 34 TO XENODORUS THE GRAMMATICUS

In the notes prefacing the preceding letter, reference was made to the patristic testimonies of Christ's two operations collected by St Maximus the Confessor,¹¹⁴ specifically to a sub-collection called *From Gregory of Nyssa*. This comprises a string of six definitions of the term ἐνέργεια, which in their terse form as culled by Maximus, do not as such prove Gregory's style. Mercati identified several of Gregory's works from which these definitions were culled: **letter 33** to Eustathus the physician, *to Ablabius*, and *on the Lord's prayer*. Some excerpts he could not identify. The fourth definition was subsequently sourced by Franz Diekamp who came upon it in a longer Greek passage which he found in an anthology of Christological texts preserved in codex Vaticanus 1142 (13th cent.) and codex Casanatensis 1357 (16th cent.). He published his findings in 'Gregor von Nyssa', *Analecta Patristica, Texte und Abhandlungen zur griechischen Patristik*, Orientalia Christiana

¹¹² ΟΜΚ: ἀνθρώποις (among men) instead of 'in Israel'.

¹¹³ I.e. 'Anointed'.

Analecta 117 (Roma: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studium 1938) pp. 13–15. The sentence corresponds to **34.2** below.

In the anthology discovered by Diekamp the authorship and the provenance of the fragments are identified: ‘By the holy Gregory bishop of Nyssa, from a discourse to the *grammaticus* Xenodorus [or Zenodoros], of which the beginning (is): There is nothing is more saving for Christians than true theology’. Diekamp saw no reason in the style of the accompanying text for doubting the reliability of the ascription. It therefore constitutes the only credible notice of an otherwise lost letter from Gregory to an otherwise unknown *grammaticus* or lower school teacher. It is true that Anastasius of Sinai also reported the passage,¹¹⁵ but in so paraphrased a form Diekamp could not use it for establishing the text. The translation here is made from Diekamp’s edition of the fragments based on the two mss. mentioned above and the text from Maximus the Confessor.

It seemed appropriate here to transliterate ἐνέργεια as *energeia* rather than translate it as operation/activity/active force, since the actual word is so much the focus of attention. The title of the letter is extracted from the caption reported above; versification is added. Since we have only these fragments, one do not know the context in which Gregory introduced his definition of *energeia*, but was almost certainly in connection with the theology of the Trinity. The term *energeia* is a cornerstone of his discussion of the Trinity in **letter 33.6e–7a**. See also **letter 24.14**.

One of the ways Gregory typically began a letter was to use a brief pungent aphorism. Though so little of this letter survives, it glories in its *incipit* which is surely one of Gregory’s most brilliant ‘one-liners’.

*To Xenodorus the grammaticus*¹¹⁶

1. There is nothing more saving for Christians than true theology¹¹⁷ . . .
 . . . **2.** For we say that *energeia* is the natural power and movement of each substance without which a nature neither exists nor is recognized. **3.** For intelligence is of intellectual beings, sensation of sense beings—by which the same lay hold of things outside them and are subject to things outside them—flight of that which flies, swimming of that which swims, crawling of that which crawls, walking of that which walks, sprouting of that which sprouts. To speak comprehensively, the identifying characteristic of each nature we call its

¹¹⁴ Maximus Confessor, *Opuscula theologica et polemica*, P.G. 91.280D–291B.

¹¹⁵ Anastasius Sinaita, *Hodegos* chapter 2, P.G. 89.65BC.

¹¹⁶ By the holy Gregory bishop of Nyssa, from the discourse to the grammaticus Xenodorus, of which the beginning is: There is nothing more salvific for Christians than true theology.’

¹¹⁷ οὐδεν Χριστιανοῖς θεολογίας ἀληθοῦς σωτηριωδέστερον.

natural *energeia*, of which only that which does not exist was deprived.
4. For that which shares in any substance will also share naturally and completely in the power that manifests it. For the true Word presides over the natural limits of substances...

LETTER 35 *TO PETER HIS OWN BROTHER ON THE DIVINE OUSIA
 AND HYPOSTASIS*¹¹⁸

This letter is found in some 36 mss. of St Basil's works, where it bears the title: (*Basil*) *To his brother Gregory on the difference between ousia and hypostasis*. It is letter 38 in the Benedictine numeration of Basil's letters. It is also found in some 10 mss of St Gregory of Nyssa's works, divided into two text families: Group A, comprising the mss: Vat. 446, Old Royal XVI, D I, Par. 503; and Group B, comprising the mss: Mon. 370, Mon 107, Par. 585, 586, Matr. 4864, Urb. 9. The title in the group A mss. is: (*Gregory*) *To his own brother Peter, on the divine ousia and hypostasis*, and in Group B: (*Gregory*) *To his own brother Peter, on the difference between ousia and hypostasis*.

Anders Cavallin demonstrated in his 1944 thesis¹¹⁹ that Gregory was not the recipient of this letter but its author. S. Rudberg, H. Dörries, and J. Quasten all accepted Cavallin's arguments, which were based on a study not of the theological contents of the letter, in which Basil and Gregory are in complete accord, but of particular ways of wording and expression which indicate Gregory's authorship. Paul J. Fedwick reviewed, corroborated and extended Cavallin's findings; these notes are mostly taken from his article.¹²⁰

Although no critical edition of this letter has appeared in GNO to date, Fedwick, in the above article, 41–46, collated Courtonne's edition of the Basilian text with Vat. 446 (= 'E' in the introduction to **letter 33**) prototype of Group A, and Mon. 370 (= 'O', idem) as the archetype of Group B. Group A was shown to have more affinity with the Basilian transmission. The readings of these two groups are shorter and more difficult, and so carry a greater warrant of authenticity. In particular Fedwick found that the omissions in E coincide with one Basilian ms.: Laur. Med. IV, 16 (10th/11th cent). He also noted examples in Group B of liberal editorializing on the part of the scribe, especially in the form of the drastically recast introduction. He concludes that 'the text of Mon. 370 should be

¹¹⁸ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne II, 29–30, Def. 2.256–259, cf. Fedwick in *OCP* article shortly cited, 41–46; tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.137–141.

¹¹⁹ *Studien zu den Briefen des Hl. Basilus* (Lund: Gleerupska universitetsbokhandeln, 1944), pp. 71 ff.

¹²⁰ 'A commentary of Gregory of Nyssa or the 38th Letter of Basil of Caesarea', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 44 (1978), 31–51. For Fedwick's definitive summary of the textual transmission see '**GrNys 2/38', BBV 1.620–623.

considered a gloss from the use of which . . . one should prescind in the literary and doctrinal study' of this letter. In working on this translation, I found that almost none of the omissions in E were corroborated in O. Other variants in E proved too insignificant to affect the translation. Consequently Courtonne's edition, with the exception of the title, is followed here.

As with **letter 33**, the present letter may be readily classed as a small dogmatic treatise. But also like that letter it is not unreasonable that having been so long published among Basil's letters, it should now be given a place here among Gregory's letters. Of special interest is the fact that, according to the inscription, Gregory sent this letter to his brother, Peter. But what are we to make of: 'For this reason, that even you may not succumb to similar notions' (**35.1c**)¹²¹ Can such a caution apply to Peter? **Letters 5** and **33** furnish some background. Eustathius of Sebasteia had for many years been a friend of Emmelia's family, and a great spiritual influence on her children and on monastic communities throughout Pontus, being as frequent a visitor to Annisa as his travels along the *Via Pontica* allowed. The drawn-out rupture with Eustathius over his doctrinal dissembling was possibly the most painful event of Basil's troubled episcopate. Basil himself visited Annisa for the last time in 375/376, and it is not difficult to discern that part of his agenda was to explain to his own siblings the theological and political issues of this new situation with respect to Eustathius, and to secure and confirm their allegiance. Meanwhile, in Nyssa, Gregory of Nyssa became the special target of Eustathius' politicking.

It is tempting to date this letter to the period after Gregory's restoration to his see, 378–380, while Peter was still the monastic superior at Annisa, for there is no particular sign in this letter that Gregory is writing to a bishop. Alternatively Gregory may have furnished his brother with this letter when he became bishop in Sebasteia, in order to arm himself in dealing with the legacy of disputatiousness left behind by Eustathius. Whether the letter is dated earlier or later, Gregory at any rate means to fortify his brother doctrinally and theologically, by providing this short treatise as a doctrinal *vademecum*. Regrettably, the original opening has probably dropped out.

This letter has been called 'the *locus classicus* for the Cappadocian analysis of the terms οὐσία and ὑπόστασις'.¹²² The distinctions between these terms had by no means been clear at an earlier period, the two words sometimes being thought of as synonymous, e.g., St Athanasius' usage in *Against the Arians* 3.65, 4.33, *To the Bishops of Africa* 4. Indeed the whole history of the Arian conflict to no small extent reflects the vicissitudes of

¹²¹ In itself, this sentence is enough to cast doubt on Gregory as the recipient. Basil may have had certain worries over his brother, but a fear that he was insufficiently trained in discourse or lacked precision in theological analysis, was not one of them. Indeed Gregory of Nyssa surpassed his brother in powers of theological speculation.

¹²² M. V. Anastos, 'Basil's Κατὰ Εὐνομίου, a critical analysis', p. 107, n. 135.

semantics concerning these two terms. The turning point came at the synod at Alexandria presided over by Athanasius in 362, when this confusion was admitted, and it was recognized that parties who bristled at each other over terms (Old Nicenes v. Easterners working with a Greek terminology formed by Origen) were really confessing the same faith. It was proposed eirenenically that all talk of either one or three hypostases should be avoided. That of course could only be a stopgap measure. The Neo-nicene front, consolidated by Basil, Meletius and Eusebius of Samosata in the late 360s and 370s, recognized that amid ongoing misunderstandings and controversies these terms required clarification. Basil articulated the distinction of the terms in 373 in letter 225, worked out in relation to Eustathius of Sebasteia, and in 375 in letter 214 to Count Terentius, worked out in relation to the strife between old Nicenes and Neo-nicenes in Antioch. Thereafter, the Neo-nicenes made these clarified definitions its special platform. The present letter is the culmination of the doctrinal development that followed the council of 362 and triumphed in the council of 381, in which Gregory of Nyssa was prominent. Compare Gregory's treatment of *hypostasis* in letter **5**, and of *ousia* and hypostasis in letter **24**. In Gregory's exposition here, οὐσία refers to 'essence' or 'substance', in the same register as 'nature', ὑπόστασις refers to 'subsistence', an individual subject or identity, assimilated in the West and eventually in the East to the term 'person'. Henceforth in speaking of the Holy Trinity, the formula is one *ousia* of the divine nature, and three *hypostases* under the names of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. In this translation οὐσία is rendered 'substance', and ὑπόστασις is transliterated as 'hypostasis'. Gregory himself scarcely adverts to the historical problems of terminology (**35.1a–b**). Consequently, in **35.6–8**, he has to resort to other means, not without value, to explain the potential ambiguity of Heb 1.3.

The eight divisions of the letter appearing in the earlier editions are maintained here; sub-versification is supplied using letters of the alphabet.

*To Peter his own brother on the divine ousia and hypostasis*¹²³

1a. Since many fail to distinguish in the mystic dogmas¹²⁴ the substance, which is common, from the principle of the hypostases, they fall into ambivalent notions and think that it makes no difference at all whether they say 'substance' or 'hypostasis'. **1b.** Consequently some¹²⁵ who accept such notions uncritically are happy to speak of

¹²³ This is more 'difficult' title in the mss. of Group A: τοῦ αὐτοῦ πρὸς Πέτρον τὸν ἴδιον ἀδελφὸν περὶ τῆς θείας οὐσίας καὶ ὑποστάσεως. It to refer to the terms of Heb 1.3 discussed at length in 33.6–8.

¹²⁴ τῶν μυστικῶν δογμάτων, i.e. of the holy Trinity, rooted in the liturgy of Baptism.

¹²⁵ E.g. some old Nicenes, and 'Marcellans', whose premise is God's one substance.

‘one hypostasis’ in the same breath as ‘one substance’, while others who accept three hypostases¹²⁶ think that they are bound by this confession to assert an equal number of substances. **1c.** For this reason, so that you too may not succumb to similar notions,¹²⁷ I have put together a short treatise for you as a memorandum on this topic.

1d. Now the meaning of the expressions, to put it briefly, is as follows:

2a. In the whole class of nouns,¹²⁸ expressions used for things which are plural and numerically diverse have a more general sense, as for example ‘man’. For anyone who employs this noun indicates the common nature, not limiting it to any particular man known by such a term. For ‘man’ has no more reference to Peter than it has to Andrew, John or James. The commonality of what is signified extends alike to all ranked under the same name and requires some further distinction¹²⁹ if we are to understand not ‘man’ in general, but Peter or John.

2b. But other nouns have a more individual signification, in that what is contemplated in the thing signified is not the commonality of nature but a circumscription of a some reality, which, as far as its individuality goes, has no communion with what is of the same kind, as for example,¹³⁰ Paul or Timothy. For such an expression no longer has reference to what is common in the nature, but by separating certain circumscribed conceptions from the general idea, expresses them by means of their names. **2c.** When several are taken together, as for example, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, and one seeks a definition of the substance of these human beings, no-one will give one definition of substance¹³¹ for Paul, another for Silvanus, and yet another for Timothy. No, whatever the terms used to indicate the substance of Paul they will also apply these to the others, and they are consubstantial with one another¹³² who are designated by the

¹²⁶ Including those whose starting point is two (or three) persons, i.e. Arianizers of all stamps, and Neo-nicenes, who risk falling into tritheism if they do not clarify their terms.

¹²⁷ ὥς ἂν μὴ καὶ σὺ τὰ ὅμοια πάθοις. The second person singular is qualified with emphasis.

¹²⁸ ὀνόματα, lit. ‘names’.

¹²⁹ τῆς υποδιαστολῆς, or ‘subdivision’.

¹³⁰ ‘in that the commonality . . . of the same kind’ missing in M.

¹³¹ ‘of substance’ missing in M.

¹³² ἀλλήλους ὁμοούσιοι, thus Gregory affirms that the Spirit is *homousios* with

same definition of substance. But when someone who has ascertained what is common turns his attention to the individual properties by which the one is distinguished from the other, the definition by which each is known will no longer tally in all particulars with the definition of another, even though it may be found to have certain points in common.

3a. This then is what we affirm: what is spoken of individually is indicated by the expression ‘hypostasis’. For when someone says ‘a human being’, it strikes upon the ear as a somewhat diffuse concept due to the indefiniteness of its meaning. Though the nature is indicated, that thing which subsists and is indicated by the noun individually is not made clear. But if someone says ‘Paul’, he shows the nature as subsisting in that which is indicated by the noun.

3b. This therefore is the hypostasis:¹³³ not the indefinite notion of the substance, which finds no instantiation¹³⁴ because of the commonality of what is signified, but that conception which through the manifest individualities gives stability and circumscription in a certain object to the common and uncircumscribed. **3c.** It is the custom of Scripture to make distinctions of this kind in many other passages as it does in the history of Job. When he begins to narrate the events of his life, Job first mentions what is common and says ‘a man’. Then he immediately individualizes by adding ‘a certain’ (Job 1.1).¹³⁵ As to the description of the substance, he is silent, for it has no bearing on the scope of his work. But by means of particular identifying notes, by mentioning the place and identifiable habits and such external marks that would distinguish him and mark him off from the common signification, he characterizes the ‘certain man’. Thus by means of the name, the place, the particular qualities of soul, and the external circumstances, the description of him whose story is to be told is made in all respects perfectly clear. **3d.** Now if he had been giving an account of the substance there would not have been any mention at all of these matters in his exposition of the nature. For the same account would have been given in the

the Father and the Son. This goes somewhat beyond Basil’s *oikonomia* in the terms to be used of the Holy Spirit and hence confirms Gregory’s authorship.

¹³³ *Hypo-stasis*, is that which ‘stands under’.

¹³⁴ *στάσις*, firm basis, rootedness, stability.

¹³⁵ The verbal sequence in Greek is that of a noun followed by enclitic: ἄνθρωπος τις ἦν.

case of Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Minaean and each of the men mentioned there (cf. Job 2.11 Sept.).

3e. Transpose¹³⁶ then to the divine dogmas the same principle of differentiation which you acknowledge with regard to substance and hypostasis in our affairs, and you will not go wrong. Whatever your thought suggests to you as the Father's mode of being—for it is idle for the soul to insist on any discrete conception because of the conviction that it is above all conception—you will think also of the Son, and likewise of the Holy Spirit. **3f.** For the principle of the uncreated and of the incomprehensible is one and the same, whether in regard to the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit. For one is not more incomprehensible and uncreated and another less so. **3g.** And since it is necessary that the distinction in the Trinity be kept unconfused by means of the notes of differentiation, we, in our assessment of that which differentiates, shall not adduce what is contemplated in common, as for example the uncreated that I mentioned or what is beyond all comprehension or any such quality. We shall seek only the means by which the conception of each shall be separated lucidly and in an unconfusing manner from that which is contemplated in common.

4a. Now a good way to trace out this argument seems to me as follows. We say that every good which comes upon us by God's power is an operation of the grace *which works all things in all* (1 Cor 12.6), as the apostle says: *But all these are the work of the one and the self same Spirit who distributes to each as he wills* (1 Cor 12.11). **4b.** If we ask whether the supply of the good which comes to the worthy in this way takes its origin from the Holy Spirit alone, again we are guided by Scripture to believe that the author and cause of the supply of the good things which are worked in us through the Holy Spirit is *the Only-begotten God* (Jn 1.18), for we are taught by Holy Scripture that *through him all things came to be* (Jn 1.3) and *subsist in him* (Col 1.17).

4c. When we have been elevated to this conception, again we are led on by God-inspired guidance and taught that through this power all things are brought from non-being into being—yet not even by this power without a principal, for there is a certain power subsist-

¹³⁶ The second person singular is used.

ing without generation and without origin¹³⁷ which is the cause of the cause of all that exists. For the Son, through whom are all things, and with whom the Holy Spirit is always conceived of inseparably, is from the Father. For it is not possible for anyone to conceive of the Son if he has not been illumined beforehand by the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3.18, 4.6).¹³⁸

4d. Since the Holy Spirit, from whom the whole supply of good things flows forth upon creation, is attached to the Son with whom he is comprehended inseparably, and has his being dependent¹³⁹ on the Father as cause, from whom indeed he issues, he therefore has this distinguishing sign of its individual hypostasis, that he is known after the Son and with him,¹⁴⁰ and that he has his subsistence from the Father.

4e. The Son who makes known *the Spirit who issues from the Father* (Jn 15.26) through himself and with himself, and who alone shines forth as the only begotten from the unbegotten light,¹⁴¹ has no communion with the Father or the Holy Spirit in the distinguishing marks of individuality. He alone is known by the signs just stated.

4f. But the *God who is over all* (Eph 4.6) has as a special mark of his own hypostasis that he is Father and that he alone has his subsistence from no cause, and again it is by this sign that he is recognized individually.

4g. For this reason we say that the distinguishing marks contemplated in the Trinity are incompatible and incommunicable with the commonality of substance,¹⁴² those marks by which the individuality of the Persons¹⁴³ is set forth as they are delivered in the faith,¹⁴⁴ each

¹³⁷ ἀγεννήτως καὶ ἀνάρχως ὑφ'εστῶσα.

¹³⁸ For similar argument concerning the Spirit see letter 33.7g.

¹³⁹ ἐξημμένον, from ἐξάπτω.

¹⁴⁰ μετὰ τὸν Υἱὸν καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ. The pneumatology in 34.4d is as close to the sound sense of the western *filioque* as can be found in the Greek fathers while maintaining the Father's *monarché*. In all Gregory's formulations, the Spirit does not issue from the Father without an inherent relation to the Son. For this understanding there was precedent in his own family's tradition; cf. the short creed of Gregory Thaumaturgus (313–370), recorded by Gregory of Nyssa in his *Life* of the saint: 'one Holy Spirit, having his subsistence from God and made manifest through the Son'. For other formulas concerning the relation of the Spirit to Father and Son see letter 24.15.

¹⁴¹ μόνος μονογενῶς ἐκ τοῦ ἀγεννήτου φῶτος. A brilliant use of paronomasia.

¹⁴² ἀσυμβατά (disparate, irreconcilable, 'unconflatable') . . . ἀκοινώνητα.

¹⁴³ προσώπων. Cf. 34.8c, d. The term is also used in letter 33.2, 7, 13 (in Greek).

¹⁴⁴ I.e. in the dominical baptismal formula and the liturgical tradition.

of them being apprehended separately by his own distinguishing marks. **4h.** Accordingly, it is through the signs stated above that the distinction of the hypostases is discovered. But when it comes to being infinite, incomprehensible, uncreated, uncircumscribed by any place and all such qualities, there is no variation in the life-giving nature—of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit I mean. Rather, the communion contemplated in them is in a way continuous and inseparable.

4i. By whatever considerations one conceives of the majesty of any one of the Holy Trinity in whom we believe, through these same considerations one will approach without variation the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and behold their glory, since between Father, Son and Holy Spirit there is no interstice into which the mind might step as into a void. This is because nothing intrudes itself between them and no other reality subsists beyond the divine nature able to divide that nature from itself by the interposition of some alien element. There is no void of some interstice, lacking subsistence, which could cause the harmony of the divine substance with itself to fissure, by breaching the continuity through the insertion of a void.

4j. But one who has given thought to the Father and given thought to him as he is in himself, has also embraced the Son in his understanding, and one who has received him does not portion off the Spirit from the Son. Instead, in sequence as far as order is concerned, conjointly as far as nature is concerned, he forms an image in himself of the faith that holds the three together.¹⁴⁵

4k. Anyone who mentions only the Spirit also embraces in this confession the one of whom he is the Spirit. And since the Spirit is *of Christ* (Rom 8.9) and *from God* (1 Cor 2.12)¹⁴⁶ as Paul says, then just as anyone who catches hold of one end of a chain pulls also on the other end, so one who *draws the Spirit* (Ps 118.131) as the prophet says, also draws through him the Son and the Father. **4l.** And if anyone truly receives the Son, he will hold to him on both sides, since the Son draws with him on one side his own Father and on the other his own Spirit. For neither can he who exists eternally

¹⁴⁵ τῶν τριῶν κατὰ ταύτῃν συγκεκραμένην ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν πίστιν ἀνετύπωσατο.

¹⁴⁶ Gregory seems to have in mind Rom 8.9 which presents synoptically the *Spirit of God* and the *Spirit of Christ*, but he also seems to have consciously or unconsciously brought in the preposition *from* from 1 Cor 2.12.

in the Father (cf. Jn 10.38 14.10 17.21) ever be cut off from him, nor he who works all things by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 12.11) ever be disjoined from his own Spirit.

4m. Likewise anyone who receives the Father, in effect receives with him both the Son and the Spirit as well, for in no way is it possible to conceive of a severance or division, such that the Son should be thought of apart from the Father or the Spirit be disjoined from the Son. Yet both the communion and the distinction apprehended in them are, beyond a certain point ineffable and inconceivable, in which neither the distinction of the hypostases ever sunders the continuity of nature, nor the commonality of substance ever dissolves the distinguishing notes.

4n. Do not wonder then that we speak of the same thing as being at once conjoined and separated, and that we think, as though in riddles (cf. 1 Cor 13.12), of a new and strange kind of conjoined separation and separated conjunction.¹⁴⁷ For unless one is attending to the argument in a disputatious and truculent spirit, one can find something similar even in things perceptible to the senses.

5a. Even so, receive what we say as at best an intimation and a shadow of the truth, not as the actual truth itself. For it is impossible that there should be correspondence in all respects between what is contemplated by means of examples and that for which the use of examples has been compassed. Why then do we say that an analogy of what is both separate and connatural can be drawn from things evident to the senses?

5b. From time to time during the Spring you have seen the brightness of the rainbow in the cloud—that rainbow, I mean, which in the custom of our common speech is called Iris. Those expert in such matters say it is formed when a certain moisture is mingled with the air, and when the dense and the moist in the vapours has become cloudy, the force of the winds compresses it into rain. **5c.** The rainbow, they say, is formed like this. When the sunbeam, after obliquely passing through the dense and opaque portion of the cloud-formation, has directly cast its own circle on some cloud, there occurs a kind of bending and return of the light upon itself, for the radiance reflects back from what is moist and shiny. For it is the nature

¹⁴⁷ An excellent use of oxymoron (concentrated antithesis) to serve a theological truth.

of flame-like vibrations that if they fall on any smooth surface that they recoil upon themselves. **5d.** Now the shape formed by the sunbeam on the moist and smooth part of the air is round, so that the air next to the cloud is necessarily circumscribed by the shimmering brilliance in accord with the shape of the sun's disk. This brilliance is both consistent with itself and divided. For because it is composed, in some sense, of many-colours and aspects, it steeps itself invisibly in the various bright hues¹⁴⁸ of its dye, stealing imperceptibly from our sight the junction of the different colours with each other. **5e.** Accordingly, no intervening space, no mixing or partitioning of the variety of colours within itself can be discerned either between the blue-green and the orange, or between the orange and the deep red, or between this colour and the yellow. For when all the rays are seen in ensemble, they are simultaneously luminous yet steal away the signs of their junction with each another. They so elude our scrutiny that it is impossible to discover how far the scarlet or the green portion of the light extends and at what point each begins to cease being at full luminosity.

5f. Just as in this example we distinguish clearly the differences of the colours, and yet we are unable to apprehend by our senses the separation between one and the other, reason, I beg you, that it possible also to draw an analogy in the same way concerning the divine dogmas.¹⁴⁹ **5g.** Thus the individual traits of the hypostases, like the bright hues that appear in the Iris, illumine each of those in the Holy Trinity in whom we believe, while no difference of individuality as to nature can be perceived between one and the other. Instead, the distinguishing individual traits shine on each in the commonality of substance. Even in our example, the substance which displays that many-coloured ray is one, refracted as it is through the sunbeam, but the bright hue of what appears is multiform.

¹⁴⁸ ἄνθεσι, ἄνθος = flower, bloom, brightness, efflorescence. The term becomes important at the end of 33.5g.

¹⁴⁹ The manner of analogy is very much in Gregory's style: first a graphic description of some natural phenomenon, then a transitional sentence querying the example followed by the application to the requires case. Gregory endeavours to provide a metaphysical probability for even the loftiest of revealed truths (34.5h). Compare the study of the cycles of the moon and the sun in *On the Soul and the Resurrection* 2.11–16 (Krabinger 20–22) to show the power of the intellect/spirit surpassing the mere senses.

5h. In this way reason teaches us even by means of creation not to feel uneasy at discussions of dogma whenever we are faced with questions hard to understand and we begin to baulk at assenting to the ideas expressed. For as in the case of things which appear before our eyes, experience appears to be stronger than argument concerning causality, so in matters transcending all knowledge, faith is stronger than comprehension through reasonings, for it teaches us both the distinction in hypostasis and the conjunction in substance. Therefore, since reason has contemplated in the Holy Trinity both that which is common and that which is distinctive, the principle of commonality is to be referred to substance, while hypostasis is the distinguishing mark of each.

6a. But perhaps someone may think that the account given here of the hypostasis does not tally with the conception in the apostle's writing where he says of the Lord that *He is the brightness of his glory and the impress of his hypostasis* (Heb 1.3). For if we have given it out that hypostasis is the confluence of the individual qualities of each and if it is confessed that, as in the case of the Father, something individual is contemplated by which he alone is recognized, and in the same way it is also believed equally of the Only-begotten, **6b.** how then does Scripture in this place attribute the name of the hypostasis to the Father alone, and speak of the Son as a form of that hypostasis, not characterized by his own distinguishing marks but by those of the Father? **6c.** For if the hypostasis is the individualizing sign of each one's existence and it is confessed that the Father's individual note is unbegotten being, and the Son is formed to the Father's individual qualities, then unbegottenness can no longer be predicated of the Father as special to him alone, since the existence of the Only-begotten is also characterized by what individualizes the Father.

7a. But what we would say is this, that for the apostle the statement in this passage is directed to another end, and it is in view of this that he uses the expressions *brightness of glory*, and *impress of hypostasis*. Whoever keeps this carefully in mind will find that nothing clashes with what we have said, but that the statement is made in a certain individualizing sense.

7b. For the apostolic argument is not concerned with distinguishing the hypostases from one another by their manifest signs, but with appreciating the genuineness, inseparability, and intimacy of relationship of the Son in respect of the Father. For he does not say

‘who being the glory of the Father’—though in truth he is that—but bypasses this as acknowledged. **7c.** To teach us not to think of a certain form of glory for the Father and of another for the Son, he defines the glory of the Only-begotten as the *brightness of the glory of the Father*, ensuring by this example of the light that the Son is to be conceived of inseparably with the Father. **7d.** For just as the radiance does not come after the flame but from the flame itself, the flame flaring and the light shining simultaneously, so he wishes the Son to be thought of as from the Father, the Only-begotten not divided off from the Father’s existence by any kind of interval, so that the caused is always conceived of together with the cause.

7d. Then in the same manner, as if to interpret the preceding thought, he goes on to say *impress of the hypostasis*, guiding us to the conception of things invisible by means of bodily examples. **7e.** For as the body is found wholly in a shape¹⁵⁰ and yet the principle of the shape is one thing and that of the body another, and no-one in giving the definition for the one would give the equivalent for the other—with the proviso that even if in theory you distinguish the shape from the body, nature does not admit of the distinction, and the one is always understood inseparably with the other—just so the apostle thinks that even if the doctrine of the faith teaches that the difference of the hypostases is unconfused and distinct, he ought also by his utterances set forth the continuous and as it were congenital relation of the Only-begotten to the Father. **7f.** He speaks thus, not as if the Only-begotten did not also have being as an hypostasis, but as not admitting of any gap in his unity with the Father. Accordingly, one who with the eyes of the soul gazes on the *impress*¹⁵¹ that is the Only-begotten also becomes aware of the *hypostasis* of the Father, **7g.** not as if the individuality contemplated in them were transferred or commingled so as to ascribe either begottenness to the Father or unbegottenness to the Son, but as being inadmissible to disjoin the one from the other and comprehend the one remaining alone. For in naming the Son it is impossible not to become aware also of the Father, since the very title connotes the Father inherently.

¹⁵⁰ σχήματι, outward form.

¹⁵¹ Parallel in meaning to the *schema*, ‘outward form’, in the analogy of the body above.

8a. Because *he who has seen the Son also sees the Father*, as the Lord says in the Gospels (Jn 14.9), he therefore says that the Only-begotten *is the impress of His Father's hypostasis* (Heb 1.3). That the thought may be understood more clearly we shall also invoke other utterances of the apostle where he speaks of *the image of the invisible God* (Col 1.15) and again *image of his goodness* (Wis 7.26), not to distinguish the image from the archetype with regard to the principle of invisibility and goodness, but that it may be shown that it is the same as its prototype,¹⁵² even though it is other. For the principle of the image would not be maintained if it were not manifest and invariable in all aspects.

8b. Consequently anyone who discerns the beauty of the image also comes to know the archetype. Indeed one who conceives in thought the form, as it were, of the Son, forms an image¹⁵³ the impress of the Father's hypostasis, beholding the latter through the former, not beholding the unbegottenness of the Father in the copy (for this would be complete identity and no distinction), but discerning the unbegotten beauty in the begotten. **8c.** Just as someone who observes in a pure mirror the reflection of the form that appears there has a vivid knowledge of the face¹⁵⁴ represented, so one who has knowledge of the Son, receives in his heart the impress of the Father's hypostasis through his knowledge of the Son. For all that the Father has, is discerned in the Son, and all that the Son has is the Father's (cf. Jn 16.15), because the Son abides wholly in the Father and in turn has the Father wholly in himself (cf. Jn 14.10). **8d.** Thus the hypostasis of the Son becomes as it were the form and face¹⁵⁵ of the knowledge of the Father, and the hypostasis of the Father is known in the form of the Son, while the individuality which is contemplated in them remains as the clear distinction of the hypostases.

¹⁵² M recasts: *'image of his Goodness, image of the archetype, image in the principle of invisibility . . .*

¹⁵³ ἀνετυπώσατο, devises, depicts for himself (more active in sense), or sustains in himself an impress (of the impress of the Father's hypostasis).

¹⁵⁴ προσώπου, otherwise 'person' as in 33.4g.

¹⁵⁵ πρόσωπον, which proves the inadequacy of translating ὑπόστασις as 'person'. 'Person' is also used at 34.4g, 8c, and frequently in the Christological letter 32.

LETTER 36 TO THEODORE¹⁵⁶

This letter is listed among Basil's letters as letter 124. J.-R. Pouchet argued a case for reassigning the authorship of this letter to St Gregory of Nyssa in 'Une Lettre Spirituelle de Gregoire de Nysse identifiée: L'Epistula 124 du corpus Basilien', *Vigilantiae Christianae* 42 (1988), 28–46.¹⁵⁷ The present author is quite persuaded both by Pouchet's arguments, and through her own familiarity with Gregory's epistolary style, which can be readily perceived in this letter.

Pouchet points out that aspects of external evidence indicate caution with regard to the supposed Basilian authorship of this letter. The present numbering of this letter, 124, is that of the Benedictine 'chronological' order. Yet in the most authoritative text family, Aa, it appears much later as no. 273, i.e. in the traditional place for *dubia*. Mss. of some sub-branches of A place letters 40, 41 and 366 (all spurious) immediately after Letter 124. In Branch Bz, letter 124 is assigned to the last or second-last rung. In Bu letter 124 is in the immediate vicinity of Letter 38, now recognized as spuriously attributed to Basil and securely reassigned to Gregory's authorship.

My own initial response to the letter is as follows. The author is clearly someone who is both steeped in Hellenism and so committed as a Christian that he is either a monk or one very closely associated with monks. The Hellenism is seen here especially in the use of erotic language with its source in Plato's *Symposium*.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, the epithets given to Theodore: goodness, guileless, pure, together with 'our most pious brothers (= monks)' and their holy 'rivalry' in charity, reveal a communion of ascetic and spiritual ideals. The title 'your Sincerity', used of persons of rank, together with another expression, 'your sacred . . . soul' (ἱερὰν . . . σου ψυχὴν) suggest the addressee may be a bishop, presbyter or monastic superior. The author of the letter is currently cut off from fellowship with Theodore and with the brothers, and finds life burdensome without it. But some 'brothers' have recently visited the author, and this has occasioned the present letter, which was written so that they could take it back with them to Theodore.

The above stylistic aspects are enough to rule out Basil as the author. Except for his earliest period (Letters 1, 2, 14), it is a conspicuous feature

¹⁵⁶ Mss.: VPBM, LC, ed.: Courtonne II, 29–30, Def. 2.256–259, tr.: NPNF 2nd ser. 8.194. On textual transmission see BBV 1.585–586.

¹⁵⁷ Fedwick remains unpersuaded; see BBV 1.675 n. 34.

¹⁵⁸ Pouchet (33) sources 'erotic disposition' in ἐρωτικῶς διατιθέμενα, ἐρωτικῶς διατίθεσθαι, Platon, *Oeuvres Complètes*, t. IV, 2^e partie, *Le Banquet*, intro. L. Robin and ed. P. Vicaire (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1949, 1989 repr.), 207b and 207c, p. 62; *Platonis Opera*, ed. J. Burnet (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901, 1946 repr.), ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟΝ 207b, 207c.

of Basil's discourse that he avoids or limits the use of Hellenism in his discourse to Christian ascetics.¹⁵⁹

There is also the particular emotionality of the author shown in a raft of affective terms, and especially the daring use of erotic language where Basil and Nazianzen would have confined themselves to the language of friendship and affection, or at least used it more moderately. Pouchet pertinently asks: 'Cette hypersensibilité sans retenue, a supposer même qu'elle vibre pour un ami intime, est-elle la marque de Basile?'¹⁶⁰ No indeed. But it *is* characteristic of Gregory of Nyssa. Compare the use of erotic language in **letter 28**.

Other aspects point to Gregory's authorship. The phrase διάθεσις ἐρωτική ('erotic disposition') is at the heart of Gregory's mature spirituality; c'est une expression typiquement nyséene'.¹⁶¹ It does not appear in either Basil or Gregory, though the two elements separately do. All the parallels in Gregory of Nyssa's writings cited by Pouchet are found in his spiritual writings.¹⁶² To those we can now add the phrase in **letter 31.1k**. In the phrase ἐναργεστάτη εἰκὼν τῆς ἀγαθότητος ('most distinct image of your Goodness'), Gregory follows Origen's and Athanasius' use of a phrase from Wisdom 7.6, but the addition of ἐναργεστάτη is uniquely his, with other examples of its use occurring elsewhere in his writings.¹⁶³ Pouchet associates ἡ περὶ τοῦ πλείονος φιλονεικία 'rivalry for surpassing' with Gregory's spiritual doctrine of *epektasis*, the perdurance of holy desire, so well elucidated by Danielou.¹⁶⁴

Pouchet argues that διάθεσις ἐρωτική is the strongest pointer to a late dating for the letter, perhaps the early 390s. It was only with *on the Song of Songs* (390) and *the Life of Moses* (392) that Gregory came into the maturity of his spiritual discourse. The phrase at v. 5 'if he leaves me any span of life' also hints at Gregory's waning years.

Another persuasive feature is the conformity of the present letter to the classic pattern of many of Gregory's letters: introductory vivid image, transitional sentence (usually a question) on the meaning of the opening image, subsequent explanation and application to what Gregory really wishes to say to his correspondent.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ See Silvas, 'The Revolution in Basil's Ascetic Discourse', *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 86–89.

¹⁶⁰ Pouchet, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁶¹ Pouchet, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁶² Pouchet's list on p. 32 begins with Gregory's earliest work: μεταθήσει τὴν ἐρωτικὴν δύναμιν . . . ἐπὶ τὴν . . . τοῦ καλοῦ θεωρίαν (*On Virginity*, GNO 8.1, 277.26). But the two closest parallels are from the great mystical works at the end of his life: τὴν ἐρωτικὴν ἀντιχαριζομένων διάθεσιν (*On the Song of Songs* (GNO 6, 461.11), ἐρωτικῇ τινι διαθέσει πρὸς τὸ . . . καλὸν (*Life of Moses*, GNO 8.1, 114.5–6).

¹⁶³ Basil Letter 38.8 (by Gregory of Nyssa), Courtonne 1.92, ln 5–6; Gregory of Nyssa, Letter 18.2, Letter 19.3, *On the Song of Songs* GNO 4.439.10.

¹⁶⁴ J. Daniélou, 'Introduction', *From Glory to Glory* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Press, 1995, repr. of 1961 edition), esp. 57–59; see Pouchet, *op. cit.*, 34–35, 38.

¹⁶⁵ See note to Letter 1.3.

The addressee, Theodore, does not appear in any other of Gregory's writings and is otherwise unknown.¹⁶⁶ Pouchet judges that he is a presbyter—superior of a community of monks (and virgins). In accounting for the distance and the 'urgent necessity' that imposes a separation, he suggests very plausibly that the hostility nursed against Gregory by Helladius, Basil's successor in Caesarea, through the 380s has led to a complete rupture between the two. Compare Gregory's painful experiences in **letter 16**. He is now a *persona non grata* in Helladius's church. If Theodore's community was in Caesarea itself (at the *Basileiad*?) any animosity of the Metropolitan towards Gregory might adversely affect the possibilities of contact. Location of Theodore's community at Caesarea would help explain how a copyist or compiler might mistakenly attribute a letter to Basil that had been found in the archives of a community once founded by Basil.

Even from an early stage Gregory was engaged with ascetics in the mould of his sisters Macrina and Theosebia and his brothers Basil and Peter—witness his *On Virginity* and his references to the 'choir of virgins' at Nyssa in **letter 6.10** and the 'brothers' at Nyssa in **letter 18.5**. He continued Basil's role as spiritual father to the monastic communities, being concerned above all in the deepening of spirituality. From the years 388–390, after the deaths of Theosebia, Gregory Nazianzen and other friends, and the departure of Theodosius for the West, Gregory became more and more taken up in the spiritual life and his ministry to the ascetic communities who sought him out for spiritual doctrine and counsel.¹⁶⁷ In the context of a shared enthusiasm for the loftiest conceptions of union with God, the ideals of spiritual *eros* that fill Gregory's mind and heart in the evening of his life, percolate almost naturally in the discourse he uses to cherished friends. There is no embarrassment, because he is sure the usage will be understood—Theodore and his circle are steeped in the metaphor.

*To Theodore*¹⁶⁸

1. They say that when those who are seized with the passion of love,¹⁶⁹ are through some more urgent necessity dragged away from the object of their desires, they soothe the vehemence of their pas-

¹⁶⁶ Cf. the early Treatise and Letter of St John Chrysostom, written in the 370s, *To the fallen Theodore* (later bishop of Mopsuestia), who was wanting to abandon his monastic vow for marriage. Chrysostom's remonstrance was successful. The letter is especially interesting in that it applies spousal spirituality to the dedicated male celibate: he too is a 'bride' of Christ.

¹⁶⁷ Pouchet, op. cit., p. 46, n. 12).

¹⁶⁸ M adds ἀσπαστική ('friendly', 'welcoming').

¹⁶⁹ τῷ πάθει τοῦ ἔρωτος, the passion of *eros*, the craving for what is considered the beautiful. Plato's *Symposium* lies behind the usage here.

sion by looking on an image of the beloved form¹⁷⁰ and feasting their eyes on it.¹⁷¹

2. Now whether this is true or not I cannot say, but what has happened to me with regard to your Goodness is not far from that description.¹⁷² 3. For since I have conceived for your sacred and guileless soul a disposition of—if I may so speak—passionate love,¹⁷³ yet to enjoy the object of this desire, as with any number of other good things, we find difficult through the hindrance of our sins, I thought that I saw a most distinct image of your Goodness¹⁷⁴ in the arrival of our most pious brothers. 4. And if, in their absence, I had fallen in with your Sincerity,¹⁷⁵ I would have considered that I had also seen them in you, since the measure of love¹⁷⁶ in each one of you, I say, is so great, that there appears in each an evenly balanced rivalry for still more.

5. For this I gave thanks to the holy God and indeed I pray that if any span of life is left to me, my life be sweetened through you, since for the present at least, I consider life a painful business and repugnant, sundered as it is from the company of those most dear. For in my judgment there is nothing in which to find *élan* when cut off from those who truly love us.

LETTER 37 TO THE GREAT EMPEROR¹⁷⁷

This letter is familiarly known as letter 365, *Basil to the great Emperor Theodosius* (Def. 4.346–351). Basil's chronology, even the received dating of his death to 1 Jan 379, precludes his writing to Theodosius, who was not proclaimed Augustus of the East until January 19, 379. However, the title in all but one of the mss. is simply *to the great emperor*. 'Theodosius' was added by the Benedictine editors, from a single ms. copied in 1377 by the Athonite monk

¹⁷⁰ Cf. letter 19 which also opens by evoking the painter of images.

¹⁷¹ This turgid, highly complex sentence is reminiscent of Gregory Nyssen not of Nazianzen.

¹⁷² This is the transitional sentence connecting a colourful opening image and its application to the present case, that marks Gregory of Nyssa's epistolary style.

¹⁷³ τις διάθεσις . . . ἐρωτική, literally 'erotic' love.

¹⁷⁴ εἰκόνα τῆς ἀγαθότητος σου ἐναργεστάτην. The phrase occurs in Letter 18.2, and 'most distinct proof' in Letter 19.1, 'image of your goodness' in Basil, Letter 38.

¹⁷⁵ τῇ σῇ . . . γνησιότητι, genuineness, unfeignedness, purity.

¹⁷⁶ τῆς ἀγάπης.

¹⁷⁷ Mss.: V, L, ed. and tr.: Courtonne 2.226–227, Def. 4.346–351; see BBV 1.661, for detailed information on the ms. record.

Ignatius, i.e., Maran and Garnier's 'Regius 2' manuscript.¹⁷⁸ But we may even question the accuracy of the shorn title. The content suggests that the letter was sent rather to a governor or high official with fiscal authority to mandate the construction of a bridge.

But did Basil write it at all? The Benedictine editors Maran and Garnier, Deferrari, Fedwick—and with the latter the best of recent scholarship—are all agreed that this letter is not by Basil. The external evidence against his authorship begins first of all with the patchiness of its transmission in the Basilian corpus. Fedwick records some 10 mss. where a full copy survives, only two of which are earlier than 13th century (used by Courtonne for his edition of Basil's letters). Secondly, in all the older mss. it appears very late in the enumeration, precisely in the place traditionally reserved for *dubia*. As to internal evidence, straightaway the overt rhetorical manner and the vocabulary are against Basil's authorship, even taking him in his most Hellenist. It might also be confirmed that it is very unlike Nazianzen's style. So it is accepted that Basil was *not* the author.

The writer is evidently resident not only in the province of Cappadocia but in the metropolis of Caesarea itself, below the bulk of great Mt Argaeus (37.6). He reveals himself as both candidly Christian and a rhetorician well versed in traditional Hellenism.

Tillemont, in arguing for Basil's authorship (5.739), thought the style of the letter not unworthy of a young man and a rhetorician, and conjectured that it was written early in Basil's life and not to the great emperor, but to some magistrate of Cappadocia. Taking these suggestions, and knowing that Basil was *not* the author, might it be possible that Gregory of Nyssa himself wrote the letter as a young rhetorician? Gregory practised the profession of rhetoric in the city of Caesarea from early 364 to 371/2, when finally won over by Basil to service of the Church as a bishop. As to his youth, he was at least six years younger than Basil if not more, so he was about 29 to 38 during this period and possibly younger by a very few years. Valens was the Emperor of the East throughout these years, and he, it will be remembered was unequivocally Arian, and, being an Illyrian brought up to the army, not very literate in Greek.

I submitted the letter to a former teacher of mine, Alan James, an erudite Hellenist for an opinion on its stylistic character. Part of his reply to me was: 'I have finally got round to reading and reflecting on the style of your Letter 36 [as I then had it]. It strikes me as self-consciously clever, both for its unusual, ornate expressions and also for its drawing of rather far-fetched parallels. I should be inclined to attribute this to a youthful writer keen to show off.'¹⁷⁹ Which amply bears out Tillemont's observations.

This letter describes in graphic fashion the flooding of the river Halys. It is true that both Basil and Gregory Nazianzen were, through their

¹⁷⁸ The fullest technical information on the manuscript transmission may be found in Fedwick's BBV 1.661.

¹⁷⁹ E-mail to the author of 18/2/05, 12:39 PM.

rhetorical training, expert users of metaphors and graphic imagery, both much called for in the contemporary period of rhetoric called *the Second Sophistic*, dominated by the great rhetorician Libanius. However evocative descriptions of nature are an altogether special feature of Gregory's style. Gregory dwelt often and sensitively on the imagery of water, weather, the flooding of rivers and the onset of rain and storms. For powerful evocations of gathering and breaking storms, see also **letters 1.25–26** and especially **6.2–4**. A long passage highly reminiscent of the description of flooding in this letter occurs in his *Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus* (GNO 10.1, 32–34), where he describes as only a local can the havoc wrought on the surrounding countryside by the 'wild and turbulent river' Lycus when it overflows its banks.¹⁸⁰ He describes the flooding of the Lycus as 'powerless to human intentions' (GNO 10.1, 33 line 11), just as here the flooding of the Halys is described as 'obeying no laws'. The readiness with which Gregory compares Gregory Thaumaturgus to Moses, and his frequent use of Moses as an example in other works culminating in the *Life of Moses*, may be compared with the reference to Moses in this letter (**37.7**). Compare also the same scriptural analogy used in **6.3**.

Instances of redundancy and the somewhat disorderly structure (which contrast with the terseness characteristic of Nazianzen's letter-writing) also accord with Gregory's style, e.g. the second description of the river's flood in **37.8** which had already been dealt with in **37.2**. Compare the hyperbolic comparison 'outstripping the tongue and the eyes' (**37.2**) with **letter 19.8**: 'incredible even to the eyes' and 'how indeed could one bring before the eyes a reality that transcends description in words', with VSM 13.6:¹⁸¹ 'what human eloquence could bring such a life before the eyes?', with *The Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus*:¹⁸² 'outstripping by far written reports and verbal accounts' and with **letter 6.2**, which happens also to be a graphic description of nature, in this case of a cold damp wind described as 'threatening a deluge as never before'. But examples of this type of hyperbolic comparison can be readily multiplied in Gregory's works.

¹⁸⁰ 'A river courses through that country which by its very name indicates its wild and turbulent flow. For it is called *Lykos* [= wolf] by those who dwell there due to its destructiveness. For this formidable watercourse bears down from its sources in Armenia through the lofty mountains, bringing with it an abundant flow. Its current, flowing everywhere beneath the base of the cliffs, is made much wilder by the winter torrents when it gathers into itself all the streams flowing down from the mountains. In the flatlands through which it courses it is most often constrained by the banks on either side, but in certain parts it overflows the embankment on the side and inundates all the low-lying area with its streams, so that with its unlooked for flood, it brings the inhabitants there into danger, whether by its sudden onset during the night or, often, by the river's overrunning the fields during the day. Hence not only crops and seeds and cattle are destroyed by the onrush of the waters, but the danger unexpectedly assails the dwellers there, bringing them shipwreck by inundating their houses with the water.' [GNO 10.1, 32–33]

¹⁸¹ GNO 8.1, 381–383, Maraval 174–180.

¹⁸² GNO 10.1, 44, lines 12–13.

The brief statement ‘But I will explain how this came about’, gives one pause. It recalls those many transitional sentences in Gregory’s letters that serve to connect a graphic opening image with its subsequent explanation. They are often in the form a question, such ‘What then, do I mean?’ (**letter 1.3**), or ‘What do I mean by beginning my letter in this way?’ in **letter 14.2**. Sometimes they are statements of explanation: ‘I write this as my introduction because of the sad tragedy which some malign power has been staging among those of longstanding worth’ in **letter 7.2**, and ‘But leaving that aside, I will come to the subject of your enquiry’ in **letter 32.2**. Once alerted to the possibility of Gregory’s classic formula for letter writing, the opening of this letter reveals itself as one of those pungent, dramatic statements with which Gregory frequently began his letters. **Letter 1**, for example, begins with such a statement, followed up with a graphic description and then the transitional question. **Letter 12** is somewhat similar, and so are **letters 32** and **33**. In this latter case, the pungent statement is first, the transitional sentence next, and the graphic description follows.

The vocabulary of the letter invites comparison with Gregory’s manner with words, which set a premium on variety, dexterity, and inventiveness. He expressed fine nuances by using or inventing words with compound prefixes, most frequently with the prefix συν. He coined neologisms: not infrequently one comes across hapax words in Lampe’s Patristic Lexicon that are cited from his works, sometimes the very word one is looking up. It is remarkable that this short letter contains three verbs with double prefixes: συνεπιγινμμενα, ἐνεπάρησαν, ἐκδυσωπήθεις. The rarity of the first two words and of another word ἀνέω parallel the Gregory’s *recherché* vocabulary. So rare is ἐνεπάρησαν it was not easy to determine its meaning in the context, as discussed below. The most striking item of vocabulary is of course ἀστραποβροντοχαλαζορειθροδαμάστου, all one word (**36.5**). It recalls the bombastic phrase-words that appear in Aristophanes’ comedies, though here humour can hardly be the intent, but rather a clever aural imitation of the turbulence it describes. Gregory’s makes use of the Aristophanic manner in **letter 1.12** and VSM 40.1¹⁸³ (and cf. **letter 27.4**). ‘Bodily misfortune’ (**36.1**) is a characteristically Gregorian idiom.

Perhaps the most suggestive feature of the letter is the prompt, almost casual mention of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia.¹⁸⁴ It is true that Basil

¹⁸³ GNO 8.1, 410, Maraval 258.

¹⁸⁴ The Forty martyrs of Sebasteia were among the most popular Christian saints of late Antiquity. The earliest surviving documents are the homily by St Basil, the three homilies by St Gregory of Nyssa and an anonymous *Passio XL Martyrum*, O. von Gebhardt (ed.), *Acta martyrum selecta: Ausgewählte Märtyreracten und andere Urkunden aus der Verfolgungszeit der christlichen Kirche* (Berlin: 1903), 171–181. For more recent analysis of the *Passio* and the state of the tradition see P. Karlin-Hayter, ‘Passio of the XL Martyrs of Sebasteia. The Greek Tradition: The Earliest Account (*BHG* 201)’, *Analecta Bollandiana* 109 (1991), 249–304.

preached a famous homily on these martyrs in the martyrion dedicated to their memory in Caesarea (*PG* 31.507–526). Yet Gregory of Nyssa himself was an altogether special client of these martyrs. He seems almost haunted by their memory. He left two, or strictly three, homilies preached on their feast day.¹⁸⁵ There was a *martyrion* to these martyrs at the family estate at Annisa in which an urn of their ashes were kept. There he buried his sister, Macrina, in their parents' grave next to the relics.¹⁸⁶ At the end of his second address, he mentions how once when he was a *neos*, i.e. a student in his early teens, his mother pressed him to take part in the synod for the martyrs. He fulfilled her request very grudgingly to say the least. During the vigil he was visited by an apparition or dream of the soldiers, who chastised him for his impiety, at which he wept repentantly over the urn of their ashes. Most intriguingly, we also find at the beginning of his first address on these Martyrs, a description of a river making havoc in the surrounding countryside, just as we read it in this letter, only it refers to the Lycus not the Halys. As mentioned above, the brewing of storms and the flooding of rivers are highly characteristic *motifs* of Gregory's imagery. At the other end of his life, in letter **1.5** we find Gregory celebrating the Forty Martyrs on their feast-day in Sebasteia itself, invited by his brother Peter now the bishop there.

There is some question concerning the account of the Martyrs' torture. Deferrari claims that this letter 'contradicts Basil's statement, made elsewhere, about the forty martyrs'.¹⁸⁷ The best I can understand this to mean is that because Deferrari has interpreted the text at v. 3 to say that the martyrs 'were drowned' in the lake, he thinks it contradicts the account in Basil's homily according to which the soldiers were coralled on the surface of the frozen lake to freeze to death in the piercing north wind. The relevant text is: τῇ ἱερωτάτῃ λίμνῃ τῶν Σεβαστηνῶν εἰς ἣν (Courtonne) / ἣν (Deferrari) . . . ἐνεπάρησαν. The trouble is this obscure last word. Initially I took it as a form of ἐμπάρειμι, meaning to be together in/on/by something. Courtonne however translates it as 'furent gelés', i.e. 'were frozen'. In that case ἐνεπάρησαν may be a copyist's corruption of ἐνεπάγησαν, aorist passive third person plural of ἐμπήγνυμι, 'to freeze into/onto', which would explain Courtonne's translation. If such is the case, it would have to be removed from the class of double prefix verbs. But either way there is no discrepancy here with Basil's description of way the martyrs were put to death.

Finally, one needs to propose a plausible account of the circumstances in which this letter may have been written and how it might have found its way into the corpus of Basil's letters.

¹⁸⁵ *Sermones Pars II*, GNO 10.1, 137–169.

¹⁸⁶ *Second Homily on the Forty Martyrs*, GNO 10.1, 166, VSM 37.1 (GNO 8.1, 409, Maraval 254–256).

¹⁸⁷ *St Basil: the Letters*, Def. 4.346 n. 2.

Two possible scenarios for the writing of this letter might be suggested, taking as our time-span Gregory's professional career as a rhetorician in Caesarea, 364–372. First that Gregory wrote this letter in the spring of 370, after the great drought of 369–370¹⁸⁸ followed by a great flood in the Halys valley near Caesarea. The Forty Martyrs' feast-day was March 9, and it is likely that Gregory himself had already heard his brother preaching on that day in Caesarea. As we know from Basil's **letters 60** and **58**, Basil esteemed his brother's gifts, and was nudging him to put them at the service of the Church. Perhaps in this civil necessity his brother's secular avocation was an advantage to be exploited, given the unfavourable religio-political situation. Basil even before he became bishop was the effective leader of the Church of Caesarea and a key organizer of the Neo-nicene alliance. This did not create the political circumstances favourable to petitions from its bishop or clergy to the Arian Emperor Valens, who indeed backed the Arian bishop of Constantinople, Eudoxius, in thwarting a proposed meeting of the Neo-nicenes in 368. Gregory, rather than Basil himself or a member of Caesarea's clergy might more plausibly undertake such a petition to the Emperor Valens or preferably to a relevant imperial officer able to mandate major bridge construction. Gregory probably had more of a reputation as a rhetorician of note in Caesarea than we know. Since the military route from Constantinople to Melitene through Iconium and Caesarea lay south of the Halys, a bridge over the river to the north would not have been a priority until now except to locals. One may wonder whether the mention of the martyrs, put to death under the Emperor Licinius, was a discreet reminder of imperial persecution. There is no great difficulty in it if a letter from Gregory, living in Caesarea at the same time as Basil and in regular communication with him, found its way into Basil's files of letters, specially if Basil had instigated it. One problem with this scenario is that in 370 Gregory was beyond being a young and enthusiastic rhetorician, and coming into his maturity in his mid to late thirties. Would that seemingly juvenile phrase-word and a certain 'show-off' quality of the letter befit Gregory at this stage?

A second possibility is that Gregory wrote this letter in 364, the very year he took up his teaching post in Caesarea.¹⁸⁹ On his own admission in **letter 13.4** to the master rhetorician of the age, Libanius, he was *enamoured* of the beauty of rhetoric. He was clearly caught up in the enthusiasm for Hellenism stirred up by Julian which lasted well after he died. In 364 Gregory; was still young(ish), new in undertaking this profession, with everything to prove. But, as mentioned above, the emperor of the East, Valens, was not very literate in Greek. Either Gregory did not know this and assumed the he would be so, or he addressed the letter to a senior

¹⁸⁸ See Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 43.34.

¹⁸⁹ Cod. Theod. 13.3.6 of January 11, 364, ascribed to Valentinian and Valens, may be Jovian's response to Julian's edicts on education or at least to the state of affairs which had arisen in various locales as a result of Julian's pro-pagan policies.

imperial officer who might be expected to be of this cultural echelon. Moreover, the religious/political circumstances advanced in the previous scenario are not relevant at this date. Basil did not come to Caesarea till late autumn of the following year, 365. The unsolved problem in this scenario is to account for the later inclusion of the letter among Basil's letters.

The above considerations scarcely constitute a 'proof' that Gregory is the author of this letter. Yet the raft of quite specific correspondences with Gregory's literary style and especially the mention of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia establish a certain possibility that a young or youngish Gregory of Nyssa, a professional rhetorician in the city of Caesarea between 364–372 who strove to combine the Hellenism of the cultural elite with a manifestly Christian commitment, was the writer of this letter.

The editions do not contain versification which is supplied here.

*To the great Emperor*¹⁹⁰

1. A disaster has come upon our country, not because of some bodily misfortune but because of a great deluge of waters.

2. But I will explain how this came about. There was a heavy fall of snow in our marshlands. It had not yet compacted in a frozen state when a warm breeze blew in and along with it there fell a southerly rain. At the sudden thaw that followed immense streams were set in motion which merged with the permanent river, the Halys,¹⁹¹ till it become an inundation outstripping the tongue and the eye.¹⁹² **3.** This is the neighbouring river that is our lot, gushing out of Armenia and taking its source in the most sacred lake of the Sebasteians, upon which the so-called 'Forty' noble soldiers of Christ were frozen¹⁹³ during the blast of a fierce north wind.

4. Since then—believe that I speak the truth, most excellent sir—this river that encircles us like a hostile and fearsome tribe has caused us no little fear. **5.** For it cannot yet be crossed on foot in any manner at any time, and hence it does not allow the homelands which are indispensable and profitable for us¹⁹⁴ to transport across it the

¹⁹⁰ Βασιλείος τῷ μεγάλῳ βασιλεῖ V, L, Βασιλείος τῷ μεγάλῳ βασιλεῖ Θεοδοσίῳ Benedictine editors.

¹⁹¹ The name itself means 'agitation'.

¹⁹² I.e. beyond the power of description and incredible to see.

¹⁹³ τῇ ἱερῳτατῇ λίμνῃ τῶν Σεβαστηνῶν εἰς ἣν (Courtonne)/ἦν (Deferrari) . . . ἐνεπάρησαν. For discussion see the notes prefacing the letter. The fact that the Forty are described as frozen in the north wind, not in the icy waters removes any ambiguity whether 'in', 'into' or 'upon' the lake is appropriate.

¹⁹⁴ τὰς ἀναγκαίας ὑμῖν καὶ λυσιτελεῖς πατρίδας.

customary merchandise. I mean, of course, the lands of the Galatians and Paphlagonians and Hellenopontians, through which and from which we have our necessities, especially sufficiency of bread, since the land surrounding here is subject to frosts and constrained by the prevailing climate and by the conquering wrath of lightning, thunder, hail and flood combined.¹⁹⁵ **6.** And besides, there is no slight threat from Mount Argaeus,¹⁹⁶ the grief of our fathers, which looks down upon us.

7. Be moved therefore, most excellent sir, and consent to win honour in your tributary land, so that by equipping this river with the munificence of a bridge by which it may be crossed, you may reveal it as a new Red Sea, able to be traversed on foot. For the Lord, having compassion on the life of the Jews, so full of groaning, deigned that they should walk with unmoistened feet in the Red Sea as on dry land, having given them Moses as their leader (cf. Ex 14.22).

8. The behaviour of our river was already erratic: now it has become a destruction to human beings, and when it rises and forms a sea and flattens all the grass-bearing land and the fields for ploughing are covered with mud, then must the plough-ox go hungry and all the beasts of burden in the surrounding country too.

9. Now if it had been a human being who injured another human being, we would not have ceased having recourse to the law-courts. But that which obeys no laws, a mighty river—how is one to deal with it? To you, therefore, most excellent sir, we must pray, to you who are able in one moment of time to check this danger to travellers.

¹⁹⁵ ἀστραποβροντοχαλαζωρειθροδαμάστου ὀργῆς, an extraordinary coinage of the author.

¹⁹⁶ The tallest mountain in Asia Minor, at c. 4000m, overlooking Caesarea from the south.

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6.13–14	131	13.20	132
6.16	132, 139	13.21	162

<i>James</i>		3.15	229
1.17	195	3.19	130
<i>1 Peter</i>		<i>1 John</i>	
1.3	138	3.5	111
1.8	125	<i>Revelation</i>	
1.18–19	111	13.18	118
2.22	129		